ORLANDO.

BY

CLEMENTINA BLACK.

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CLEMENTINA BLACK,

AUTHOR OF "A SUSSEX IDYL," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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ORLANDO.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE EASTER VACATION.

"Betwene Mershe and Averil
When spray beginneth to spring."
Old English Lyric Poetry.

A BUSY man's time goes quickly, and Orlando was quite surprised to recollect one morning that Easter was close at hand, and that the Duncannons would be coming to their temporary home next week. He walked up from the damp fields, speckled here and there with the first daffodils, to look at the condition of the house. Mr. and Mrs. Haverdike were in London, but directions had been sent down, and he

found the cottage given up to cleaners and scourers. The rose trees, of which Duncannon had spoken so hopefully, had suffered from the March winds, and were straggling, muddy and rain-beaten, across the path. The lilacs and laburnums were in leaf, and before many weeks, would be in flower, and amid the dark mould peeped the points of crocuses. He had glanced through the rooms, anxious to see whether he could add anything to their comfort, and, observing that no piano was to be seen, had gone home smiling to himself. He wrote, the same evening, to Duncannon, begging to be made useful, and offering to have their luggage fetched from the station, a matter not always easy of arrangement in Sherborne. And for the next few days his own plans and schemes were always being interrupted by some fresh idea on behalf of his coming friends. Duncannon, in his letter of answer, men-

tioned that Viola was coming with them, to stay a few days before going on, at the end of the vacation, to Cambridge. She had, as Orlando knew, become in the previous autumn a student of the then newly opened college for women. It seemed to him almost unimaginable that such a college could exist. The notion of a grave and studious group of female undergraduates seemed only appropriate to the pages of 'The Princess;' and that Viola Cash was otherwise than grave and studious, was not to be supposed. He was rather curious to see whether the new way of life had made any perceptible change in her.

He left his friends alone on the first evening, but the next morning walked over, with Rob, as usual, at his heels. Duncannon caught sight of him, and came out to meet him.

"Here you are. Glad to see you. The authorities are delighted with everything,

and are planning lawn-tennis already. Julia is as pleased as a child with a new toy."

They went in, and Rob lingered behind them, to rub his muddy feet, according to rule, on a door-mat. Mrs. Duncannon met them, with just her mother's smile and tone of voice.

"I am so glad to see you, Mr. Sherborne, and so much obliged to you for getting the luggage up for us on Tuesday. It made all the difference to our getting comfortably settled. And Sarah is quite charmed with the politeness of your man, who insisted upon coming in and opening all the packing-cases for her."

While she spoke the open-standing door was pushed a little wider, and Viola and Rob came in together, apparently on the most friendly terms.

"You have done a wonder, Miss Cash, in winning Rob's heart at first sight," said

Orlando, looking with surprise at the dog's head, nestled against her hand.

"Most dogs like me," she answered. "*My* heart was won by the way he rubbed the mud off his paws before he came in."

She sat down and Rob laid his head upon her knee, while he kept an attentive eye to follow his master's movements.

"I have been pacing out the lawn," she continued. "There would be just room for lawn-tennis on it; and I would mow the grass myself with pleasure."

"Lawn-tennis, Sherborne," observed Duncannon, "is the science chiefly studied by the ladies of Newnham."

"As, perhaps, Mr. Sherborne remembers that boating is by the men," said Viola, in a tone too demurely matter of fact to allow an opening for denial.

"I little thought," said Orlando, "when I was studying that science there, that I should live to see young ladies invade us,

and discover and proclaim our innocent weaknesses."

"Let us hope that mutual emulation may cure the weaknesses of both," said Viola, smiling. "But you speak of us as invaders. That is rather hard. We want to be fellow-soldiers. It is the readiness of people to talk like that makes women so apt to be bitter."

She, however, was not speaking bitterly, but very gently.

"I used the word carelessly, not in earnest," Orlando hastened to say.

And Julia interposed, "I won't have Mr. Sherborne made to stand and give his watchword. He shall have a special absolution to be as heretic as he pleases."

"I am very much obliged indeed, but, as Miss Cash says, I thought I was a fellow-soldier."

Viola, who had looked down at the black head against her knee, looked up, at this,

with a frank smile of pleased and approving concord.

Duncannon had leaned against the mantel-shelf, watching the discussion in silence. Now, abruptly, according to his wont, he struck in.

"Sherborne, thank you for sending up your piano."

"Why, how did you know?" asked Orlando, quite disconcerted.

Duncannon chuckled.

"Didn't I tell you so, Julia? I thought I remembered it as having stood in your breakfast-room."

"Oh, why did you do that, Mr. Sherborne?" Julia began.

"Chiefly, I think, in the selfish hope of hearing a little music. There is another piano left at Sherborne, and by dividing them I hoped that I might, like the lady in the nursery rhyme, have music wherever I went."

"Which means, I trust, that you are coming here pretty often," said Duncannon.

"And that I hope you will come pretty often to me. You can't imagine how glad I have been in looking forward to having you for neighbours. Indeed, I came up this morning chiefly to offer a suggestion. Will you come to dinner with me this evening? I am sure Mrs. Duncannon cannot have had time to discover our resources in the way of butchers and so forth, yet; I am sure you will have enough to do in bringing out the contents of all those packing-cases, without thinking of dinners."

The 'suggestion' was made with a peculiar smile of appeal inherited from his father, and not easily to be resisted by persons of gentle disposition.

"Thank you," said Julia. "I do confess that I was wondering how, when, and where provisions could be got. Indeed,

I was just going to persuade Harry to march into the village, with a big basket on his arm, and forage for us."

"'You was, ma'am, was you?' as Fanny Squeers says. Then I think we have had a very lucky escape. I don't know how it is, but when I buy meat it always grows tough on its way home, and fish and fruit grow stale."

"Your artistic education, perhaps," said Viola, "leads you unconsciously to think things the better for being old."

"If so, Viola, you might be readier to forgive us for denying to women an education which opens up an endless vista of bad dinners."

Orlando looked at Viola, rather expecting that she would give a serious answer. But though Viola had for once taken a light word in earnest, she was not subject to that kind of dulness, and merely laughed.

Then Orlando, mindful that his house-

keeper would feel hurt if she had not due notice of guests to dinner, stood up to go. Rob at once left Viola and went to his master's side, but the look which had watched Orlando was now transferred to her. As he walked homeward, Orlando's mind was haunted by Viola's little speech, "We want to be fellow-soldiers." Both the manner and the matter of the words had pleased him particularly. He was glad to think that he should see her and hear her again so soon.

The evening was the most pleasant which he had spent in his own house since his father's death. The desire for society had slumbered in him. His neighbours were well-meaning, kindly people; he had many subjects of interest in common with them, and it certainly would never have entered his mind to tell himself that they bored him; but their conversation never touched the deeper currents of his

own thoughts, and it was long since he had known that best sort of talk in which

> 'Thought leapt out to wed with thought
> Ere thought could wed itself with speech.'

To-day he was once more among those who were accustomed to a life of wider scope. He found himself watching, with keen interest, the quick changes of Viola's face, on which every inflection of her thought showed itself. She did not speak very much, but what she said seemed to Orlando to make a great part of the conversation. From her, his eyes went to Duncannon and to Julia. He noted the little improvements in Duncannon's outer man; the more smoothly ordered hair, the greater precision of collar and wristband, the nearer approach to a fit in the cutting of the coat. Julia, too, had changed a little. Her keen eye had somewhat softened, her smile had gained benevolence; a touch of sharpness, which might

have developed into sourness, had left only a mere flavour, to save serenity from becoming insipidity.

Presently there was music. Viola's voice, if not as sweet as Silvia's, was fresh and pure, and contrasted, as Silvia's used to do, with Julia's mellower contralto. The solitary rooms seemed to have awakened from a long slumber into life again. The pleasant tone of his own laugh rang in the entrance when his guests were leaving. His housekeeper, looking up, wondered in herself. Then she heard his voice and step pass along the terrace with the others, and presently return, followed by the even footfall of his dog. As he came, he sang, and passed into the library, singing still. His housekeeper slowly nodded, and then as slowly shook her head.

He had arranged to go to London next day, to meet some of the directors of the

Suffolk Railway Company, and intended at the same time to see some stoves of a new pattern, to inquire into the price of cement for cottage flooring, and several other matters of a similar sort. He meant, however, to despatch all this business as quickly as possible, so that he might be back in Sherborne by the middle of the next day, and might visit two half-built cottages of his, before the workmen left at early Saturday hours. He had not a perfect confidence in his builder, and a long acquaintance with the 'customs of the trade' had taught him that where no clerk of the works was employed, personal inspection at frequent, but irregular, intervals was absolutely necessary to ensure good work. His resolve to return early was strengthened by happening, as he walked to the station to meet the builder coming thence to the works.

"Going to catch the train, sir?" asked the builder, cheerfully.

Orlando answered "Yes," and fancied that he observed a look of satisfaction on the builder's face.

He stayed, that night, in Portland Place with Millie and Gilbert, and heard by chance that Captain Grove was very ill, and that Elizabeth was nursing him. It was Gilbert who told him, and he added, "It makes me sick, Orlando, to think of a woman wasting her whole life and heart upon such a wretched creature as that. You know what she was. Could you have imagined her throwing herself so utterly away?"

"I can imagine," said Orlando, speaking slowly and with pain, "that she would be very constant to a man whom she had loved once."

"Well, women are so," said Gilbert; "but it is a mystery." He had not the slightest suspicion that his own affection was a plant of as deep growth as he

fancied Elizabeth's, nor that the real secret of her constancy lay in the knowledge that she had never, with her whole heart, loved her lover.

Orlando sighed, more than once, as he thought of Elizabeth watching in a foreign country by that sick bed. What could be wished for her but the release of his death? And if she were released so, what would her life be to her, having loved him all these years? The thought of her haunted him as he looked at stove after stove, inquiring prices and capabilities. But the need of speedy decision presently absorbed his attention. He gave his orders, and hastened off to catch his train for Sherborne.

Arriving there, he struck across country to the cottages. The damp, dark brown fields smelt of rain; blackthorn buds were brown, and would soon be white upon the hedges; the banks were strewn with prim-

rose patches, and gusts of perfume came up from unnoticed violets as he passed. Orlando strode along under the blue spring sky, and a smile came to his lips. He forgot his expectation of finding out his men in misdemeanour, and thought of the sweetness of his native air compared with that of London. But alas! for the instability of human cheerfulness. Arriving at the works, he found the men busily building into the inner courses of the walls (where, as soon as the wall was finished, they would be invisible) some half-hundred or so of ineffectual dusty, sandy, 'soft' bricks, which he had himself sorted out and rejected, two days before. He did not say many words, but the few were very decisive. He left the men pulling down reluctantly their morning's work, under the angry eyes of the builder, and turning, walked away, with his enjoyment of earth and sky completely dashed.

CHAPTER II.

ON A SATURDAY AND SUNDAY.

"Things were as in the April-tide ;
And daffodils and cowslips grew,
And, hidden, the March violets blew."
W. Morris, 'The Earthly Paradise.'

Orlando walked homeward, wearing on his face a frown of deep annoyance not often to be seen there. Amiable as, on the whole, he was, there were some things in the world whose very thought he found it difficult to endure with patience, and upon this list bad workmanship and dishonesty stood high. The bright sky and the flowery fields had lost their power; even the healthy hunger induced by his walk had departed from him. The vexed

mood was still on him as he crossed a little copse, green now at every twig and joint. A deep and sudden bark sounded from among the underwood, and Rob came bounding and breaking through to his side. Orlando's frown relaxed into an expression of grave benignity, and he stopped to welcome Rob with hand and voice. The rustle of the bushes had diminished, but not ceased, with the appearance of the dog. Looking up, Orlando saw Viola coming down the slope of the plantation towards him. She carried a very large truck basket, nearly full of flowers; her skirt was tucked up over a bright petticoat, and her boots were very muddy. The apparition startled away the last remnants of his gloom.

"Oh, Miss Cash, good morning!" came from his lips, with a smile as pleasant as her own.

"Good morning," she replied, as she

came down into the path, and gave him a bare and rather cold hand. "I wondered what made Rob rush off in that sudden way. We thought you were in London?"

"I am on my way home from the station —by an indirect road you'll say—but I wanted to go up to the cottages I am building."

A momentary shade of annoyance crossed his face again. They walked on for a few yards in silence, Rob pushing his nose between them.

"Harry has begun work," said Viola. "He has been trying his cartoons on the wall, and seeing where they want altering. He wants you, if you will, to go up and see them, and tell him what you think."

"Will he be there this afternoon?" Orlando asked.

"Yes; but don't trouble to come up this afternoon. You will be tired."

"Oh no. I'll go down to the Lodge and get some luncheon, and be up at the Haverdikes' by half-past three."

"Would it not be better to come at once and have some luncheon with us? Yes, do."

The suggestion was very inviting.

"But I don't like to come in upon your sister in that way, without any notice," he began.

"My sister would be very much hurt if she thought you doubted her welcome."

"But it might be inconvenient."

"Honestly, Mr. Sherborne, I would not have asked you if I had not known it would not be inconvenient. And now, honestly on your side too, don't say 'yes' unless it suits you best."

"But, indeed, it does suit me best, and thank you very much."

Rob, finding their progress too regular for his taste, had bounded off, and now

returning, pushed his head first against one hand and then against the other.

"I never knew Rob take a liking to any one before in the way he has done to you," said Orlando.

Viola smiled, flattered, as we all are, when an animal offers us affection.

"He came up yesterday morning, and followed me about, all day, in the most disconsolate manner. In the evening he went home; but before I was up this morning, I heard him barking at the door, and had to go down and let him in."

"I am afraid he will miss you when you go away."

"So new a fancy can hardly have gone very deep," said Viola, drawing her hand across Rob's head.

To Orlando it was strange to see any other than his own moving across that black surface. He noticed that her hand was finely formed, and finished in

detail, small-jointed and long in the fingers, and that she wore no rings. He wondered whether she wore earrings, and lifted his eyes to the line of her hair under her hat.

No, her ears were guiltless of any such adorning barbarism. But her dress did not suggest that the absence of ornament implied the absence of care. Viola quite recognized among the rights of women that of looking as pretty as nature and good taste would allow. It was the era of impossibly massive hairdressing, and of short upper dresses, ungracefully flounced and puffed. Viola's hair and skirts followed a wise path of compromise, avoiding the artifices of fashion's extreme, or the eccentricity of a too markedly opposite style. Her walk, too, was free from the odious bend which was the trick of the day. She bore herself upright, and moved with a full, free step that had just the slightest suggestion of soldierliness.

These observations on Orlando's part had not been made in silence. They were the accompaniment running as undercurrent in his mind while he listened to her outspoken admiration of the old Arthurian legends, with which, in Sir Thomas Malory's version, she had just made acquaintance. The theme was congenial, and they presently advanced into a deeply critical discussion. They were walking, by this time, in a lane between two hedges. A little child was wandering slowly by the bank, gathering cowslips into her pinafore, with views, probably, of a cowslip ball in the future. Suddenly, through a gap in the hedge, came Rob at a long leap; the child was thrown into the road, and the cowslips, scenting the air, fell scattered in all directions. It was pure misadventure on Rob's part, and he looked almost as disconcerted as the child. The child remained lying in the road, opened her

mouth, and gasped. A dismal howl—justified, it must be owned, by the circumstances—would evidently be the next stage. But before it could have time to break forth, Viola had promptly set the amazed victim again upon her feet, put an arm about her, and said, in tones of consoling sympathy, "Poor little soul!"

The child gasped again, blinked a little, and then shut up her mouth in silence.

Viola examined the sturdy knees, then the brown palms and knuckles. The damage to these prominent points appeared to be trifling, and a happy roundness of figure, partly natural, but greatly assisted by costume, had kept the head and face at safe distance from the ground. "Well, there is not much harm done, after all," said Viola, cheerfully.

Then, and not until then, one group of knuckles sought the corresponding eye; the small underlip began to protrude and to tremble.

"Why, what's the matter?" Viola asked, fearful of unseen hurts.

"My—y f—flow—ow—owers."

Orlando made haste to gather them up, but some had fallen in muddy places, and some the child had fallen upon, and a few Viola, in her haste, had trodden. "Look, here are most of them again, and you'll soon be able to gather as many more again," said Orlando, restoring them carefully to the pinafore, whose hem she still firmly grasped.

The consolation was appropriate, but it failed. She left off crying, indeed, while she received it into her mind, but, being a logical young person, presently looked him full in the face and said, not without scorn, "'A mi't have had them and they too."

Orlando was completely crushed, and hardly dared to offer pecuniary compensation in the shape of a penny. This, however, she accepted without demur; a grin

restored her countenance to its normal form, and Orlando and Viola proceeded on their way.

"A fine instinct for political economy," said he. "Don't you think she ought to have a chance of Newnham?"

Viola looked back at the small, sturdy figure—the chubby hands now, as before, gleaning from the hedges, the round, apple-red cheeks and half-open mouth, whence issued an inarticulate, contentedly crooned chant. "Do you think she would thank you for the suggestion?" said she.

"Well, perhaps not. But, then, consider what her country might gain. How, if she should be a sort of mute, inglorious Adam Smith—an Eve Smith, as you might say?"

Viola slackened her pace a little, clasped her hands, and looked to the hedges and the sky. "To think," she said, "that I should live to hear a country gentleman, an owner of property, an employer of

labour, preaching radical doctrines in his own village! After this, I shall begin to have hopes of the Millennium. But are you not afraid that your neighbours will rise *en masse* and drive you into exile?"

"I do not alarm their minds with doctrine. I only carry out this or that little bit of reform as opportunity presents, and take care to let them know, incidentally, how well it pays. Just now I am hoping to afford what my mind has been set upon for some years—the building of a school."

Viola looked up, much interested.

"It will be rather expensive," he went on, "but that's of course. I would rather do all, and have my own way, than do half and be liable to interference; that is not very radical, I am afraid, but so it is. My plan—I may confess it to you, who are not a Sherbornian—is this. By-and-by the School Boards will come into the country; then I shall resign my school into their

hands, and Sherborne will have had a double advantage. When there was no Board School, it will have had a private school; and when the Board does come, there will be no private school, dropping behind the times as they nearly always do, to draw away half its scholars. But I should not dare to say that to most of my neighbours. In fact, I believe many of them will applaud my scheme on the very ground of its being a bulwark against the hated Board."

They looked at each other and laughed. Orlando was very sure of his listener's sympathy, for her mother was a member of the London School Board.

"And how when you come to the transfer?"

"Oh, it must be put clearly before them that they would have had to build at their own expense if I had not done it."

"And do you mean to start with the

same kind of teaching as the Government schools? It would simplify matters, I should think. And besides, the teaching is really on so good a plan."

"It *is* really good, is it? The fact is, I know so little about the actual details of the working. I thought you might be able to enlighten me a little."

"Certainly, what I have seen of Board Schools gives me a very high idea of their method. It is true it is rather a new broom yet. But have you no school at Sherborne?"

"No—absolutely none. There is one at Shelbridge, about half-way between here and Addlecombe, but it is a long distance for the children to go there. There was an attempt at a school here in the time of my great-uncle, who was vicar, but somehow it died away."

"That relieves you from one trouble which perplexes the School Boards. They

don't know how to deal with the little private schools, which are sometimes kept by the most worthy and well-meaning people, and yet are so inefficient. Mamma made a tour of all those in the district, and drew up a report—or rather, as it happened, I drew it up for her." She broke into a sudden smile, and interrupting her businesslike narration. "Only fancy!" she said; "there was a meeting in our neighbourhood in favour of a denominational school, and I was held up to commiseration as a second Caddy Jellyby! How they knew that I had anything to do with it, I can't imagine. It was fortunate I was not there, for I certainly should have said something which might have been considered very unfeminine."

Orlando's face expressed the greatest indignation. "Nobody, however, who knew anything of Mrs. Cash could possibly be influenced by such an absurdity," he said, warmly.

"Oh, Mr. Sherborne, it is clear that you have not seen much of the people who speak against women's rights. Mrs. Jellyby comes out as regularly as a Guy Fawkes on the Fifth of November; Mrs. Jellyby in public, and an invariable formula in private: 'I like women to be women, and men to be men.'"

Orlando thought he remembered meeting the formula before, and that it had seemed to be considered final.

"I never shall forget hearing one particularly foolish man say that, three times in the course of one evening. At the third time Cecily could bear it no more, and answered, 'It is fortunate that you do, for no amount of wishing would succeed in making anything else of them.'"

"Was he entirely quenched?" asked Orlando, hearing in his ears Cecily's clear, high voice, and imagining the steady gaze with which she would have fixed her victim.

"I cannot tell. He never said it again —to us. But how I have wandered from what I meant to speak of! It was quite melancholy to see what an immense amount of time, money, and good intention was being bestowed in that district with a lamentably disproportionate result. It brought home to one very strongly the need for some centralizing agency."

"You don't think, then, that large schools are bad for the children?"

"Not of such a size as you would get in Sherborne," said Viola. A truly womanly answer, practical and yet evasive, solving the present case, but declining to commit herself to general statements either positive or negative.

They came up to the cottage as she spoke, and Orlando followed her into the garden, where Julia was busy among her flower-beds.

Orlando's afternoon was so pleasant that

it almost made amends for the morning's annoyance due to Mr. Madge. Viola's knowledge of school details promised to be very useful, and the method of its imparting was certainly very agreeable. It was agreeable, too, to explain his plans to a listener so intelligent and so sympathetic. Her frank face spoke as clearly as her voice, and with greater quickness. Her hints about ventilation, teachers' desks, wall-cementing, and other points of arrangement, excited his strongest approval. He thought within himself that her clear sense and quick observation would have been invaluable in a man. Then, stopping his thought short, he demanded of himself why he should suppose them less valuable in a woman.

A little later they went up to the new house. As they stood in the long, unfinished, airy room, looking at Duncannon's cartoons, another side of her character

presented itself. She had a fine taste as well as a keen intelligence. Her technical comprehension was less instructed than Julia's, and her eye had, perhaps, a duller sense of correct execution ; but it seemed to Orlando that in the spirit of the work — so far as spirit and execution can be dissociated—Viola's perception was both deeper and more delicate. He began to have a good deal of respect for this girl of twenty, who knew something, it appeared to him, of almost everything that he knew, and much of many things of which he knew nothing. Her music, for instance, was no mere instinct, like his own, but a cultivated knowledge. Her criticism, too, he perceived, was articulate and educated. She was able to assign a ground for the opinions of which Orlando could only feel the justice.

The four returned together to the cottage, and no very strong persuasion was

needed to induce Orlando to spend the evening there. Duncannon was full of an exuberant glee, the result of delight in his work, and Viola was scarcely more sober. They insisted upon playing games. Duncannon declared that his brain required relaxation after the work of the day; and Viola gravely pointed out that she would never have another spring in which she would not be of age, and that it was needful to get as much play as possible while she was still not come to years of discretion. Therefore they started at capping verses, and presently changed to other quick-witted pastimes of a similar kind. Viola was as earnest in these as she had been in her talk of education and of art. The heartiness of her absorption in the employment of the moment gave her, perhaps, her most peculiar charm, and was the key to that variety of interests which struck Orlando. He watched her now, her mis-

chievous eyes full of some hidden plan for the winning of the game, her open triumph when she succeeded, her quick repartees, half wit, half mere gaiety, but with no disfiguring touch, either of dulness or of roughness; and as he watched her he wondered that he could have thought her wanting in girlishness. The difficulty was in realizing that this mirthful girl could be the serious student, on whose behalf a little pile of Greek books and a well-worn Lexicon lay modestly bestowed in a corner. It came into his mind that he would like to see her dance. He was sure that her bodily motions would be as swift and graceful as those of her mind.

Again Orlando's evening left him with a smile upon his lips; he walked home through the pleasant half-darkness, and felt a freshness of youth and hope that harmonized with all the awakening promise of the world about him. His empty

home struck him with no chill to-night. His mind was full of plans for the future, for his school and for calling to discuss it with Mrs. Cash next time he should be in town. Suddenly among these pleasant thoughts came that of Elizabeth. How, he wondered, were things with her ?

Sighing, he went into the library, and took up the letters which lay there waiting for him. Invitations, circulars, the acknowledgment of a subscription ; a few lines from Arthur Rendell, newly engaged to be married, and grateful for good wishes. He consigned them methodically to their proper resting-places ; the invitations and Arthur's letter to the drawer where papers awaited reply, the receipt to a neat file, the circulars to the waste-paper basket. Then, lighting a cigar, he took out his pocket-book and referred to a price-list procured that morning in London. Calculations followed, and entries in a business

diary, and his day ended with a recollection of its most disagreeable part, the sins of an unreliable builder.

The next morning brought a bright, clear Sunday. The long, Sherborne Lodge pew, in which Orlando had sat for so many months alone, was shared to-day by his new neighbours. What more natural than that, when service was over, he should walk with them on their homeward way? Rob, who always accompanied his master to the church door, and lay in the porch until he reappeared, was, of course, of the party.

"That's the piece of ground that I hope to have my school upon, Miss Cash."

Viola looked with critical keenness, and remarked, "You won't have much room for a play-ground." In the same breath she stopped herself. "How absurd! Of course you don't want a play-ground here. My notions are all gathered from schools in towns."

"Do I hear Viola talking school on Sundays?" interposed Duncannon; "and Sherborne encouraging her?"

"'The better the day,' Harry, 'the better the deed.' And it is quite as good a deed to build English schools as to subscribe to foreign missions."

Orlando, who had pressed forward to point out the plot of ground to Viola, fell back a little and said, "I suppose I daren't, after that, ask, as I was going to do, what you all thought of our stained windows and monuments."

"Stained windows," Duncannon decreed, "are a strictly Sunday subject; and I for one thought that I should like to know how they managed their colouring."

There was a general laugh at this secular confession.

"I thought," said Julia, "that I should like to go in on a week-day, when I might walk about and stare."

"I can give you the key whenever you like," said Orlando, quickly.

"What business have you with the church key? Is it a manorial privilege?" asked Duncannon.

"Well, I don't know. I do have it. I think it is because I am a churchwarden. If you were to brawl in church, it would be my painful duty to turn you out."

"This is really a fine country," Duncannon meditatively remarked. "If a man has no fixed work of his own, he can be provided with offices enough to employ every hour of his day, and nobody will hurt his feelings by offering to pay him. Are you, by chance, a magistrate also?"

"No, I am not. I cannot undertake to protect you if you trespass in search of landscape backgrounds."

"Which it is perfectly certain," said Viola, "that he will."

"Don't you delude yourself, Sherborne,

with any such idea. Your flat Midlands are not at all my affair. If I do want scenery, I'll go to the authentic thing: 'Astolat, which is Guilford,' and

> 'Tintagel, half on sea and high on land,
> A crown of towers.'"

"I am sure," said Julia, "that the authenticity would delight Mrs. Haverdike. But I should advise you to go in the warm weather, and to take me with you."

"It would be pleasant, would it not? By-the-by, Sherborne, will you lend me your face, if I want it, for one of the Round Table?"

"Might I ask, whose?" Orlando cautiously inquired. "I don't wish to be immortalized as Mark or Modred."

"Oh, I don't know that I want you to be anybody definitely named. But you would make a very good accessory—a well-behaved young knight, who would look on

with proper sympathy in whatever was going forward."

Orlando accepted this observation graciously, and then bidding them good-bye, turned homeward with his dog.

CHAPTER III.

RELEASED.

"The morning mists grow thin and clear,
And death brings in the day."

Lewis Carroll.

The months had come round again to April. Nice was empty, and the heat and the mosquitoes had returned. Major Glendinning and his daughter were, however, still here. The Villa Nalli stood in the morning sunshine, with all its shutters closed towards the east, and casting behind it a long shadow. In the shadow sat Elizabeth, with a book upon her knee. Her father had chosen the cooler morning hours for his daily walk, and was out, supported on the arm of Bannacker. She

was alone and in peace. The garden in which she sat was a veritable Eden; banks of carnation and wallflower scented the air, and drew the eye with their broad depths of colour. A vine grew over the back of the house; the low garden wall was clothed with pellitory and stone-crop. A giant aloe, many of whose spear-shaped leaves were as long as a man, occupied the centre, standing out in dark, simply cut lines against the sky. The olive trees had not yet begun to put on their summer dinginess, but had a cool tinge of yellow, due to the pollen of their countless tiny flowers. Geraniums, heliotropes, and verbenas were blossoming everywhere, with a luxuriance of blossom not to be seen in England. Surrounding the seat where Elizabeth was sitting was a rough, wooden trellis put up by Bannacker about two years before, and overgrown already on one side by a perfect tangle of full-bloom-

ing tea-roses, on the other by a nasturtium, which had attained, as nasturtiums do at Nice, the proportions of a woody stemmed, perennial shrub. She was wearing a white dress, and a large parasol was leaning against the seat at her side. The air was full of the hum of insects, and the many-flitting butterflies made spots of vivid colour in the air. As she sat, a figure came towards her from the side of the house. Looking up, she saw a tall, thin, and beardless young man wearing the long coat and soft, wide-brimmed hat of an English clergyman, and carrying over his head the universal white sun-umbrella. She knew this young Englishman; he had come out last autumn under the hard sentence of banishment or death, and he was staying on through the summer because he must spend a second winter here, and could not afford the double journey. Elizabeth had heard him preach and read

at the English church, and had met him once or twice, earlier in the season, at the house of some American acquaintances.

She stood up and went forward with a smile.

"You will think it very strange of me to come up, Miss Glendinning, and so early too," he began.

"Not at all," said she. "There are so few English left now that it is quite refreshing to hear one's own language. My father is out, or I am sure he would have been pleased to see you. Won't you sit down? It is pleasanter here for the present than it is indoors."

"I came," said the young man, "upon a very painful errand."

"Yes?" said Elizabeth, her face changing a little. "Is it anything in which I can help you?"

The young curate always said afterwards that her face and words in asking that

question touched him more than any positive misery that he had ever witnessed. He hardly knew how to fashion his answer.

"No, thank you very much. It is rather, I wish that I might be able to help *you*."

Elizabeth's hand groped for the wood work of the rough arbour.

"My father?" she said, speaking faintly, and turning very pale.

"No; but I believe—I think—you know Captain Grove, do you not?"

She bent her head a little, and leaned more heavily against the support.

"He has met with an accident, or had some sort of fit—we hardly know. They brought him to my lodging—it was close by that it happened; and this morning he seemed a little conscious, and begged me to let you know."

"Thank you," said Elizabeth. "Is it—a very serious matter, Mr. Turner?"

"I am almost afraid that it is. I thought perhaps you would come and see him."

Elizabeth uttered a low, murmured "Oh!" and put her hand before her eyes.

Poor Mr. Turner stood deeply sympathetic, but quite paralyzed by the sight of her pain, and unable to find a word.

"I will come," said she, "now—at once. Is there nothing that would be of any use to him that could be sent down?"

"No, I think not. Dr. Lemercier has seen him, and sent in a Sister of Charity to look after him."

"I will come," said she again. "Will you come in for a few minutes, and be so kind as to wait for me?"

She led the way into the house, and left him in a cool, shaded room. Then she summoned Mrs. Bannacker, and explained on what errand she was called away. Before Mr. Turner had thought it possible that she should be ready, she came back

to him, wearing a white Algerian scarf round her shoulders, and a wide, Italian straw hat. Her appearance had not for one instant occupied her own thoughts, but it inspired something like awe in the mind of the young curate. Her white dress, her extreme paleness, and the exquisitely refined lines of her face and figure combined to give something spiritual to her aspect. He felt that he was hardly fit to walk beside her.

They went out together, and descended by the steep and stony, but shorter and less frequented hill-way, to the town. Elizabeth asked for particulars of Captain Grove's illness. Mr. Turner could give but few. He had been found, lying with his head upon a doorstep, insensible. His head seemed to have been cut in falling. There was no appearance of his having been attacked by any person, but it was possible that he might have been. The

doctor could not precisely say whether he had been overcome by sudden illness and so fallen, or whether, falling accidentally, the blow had sufficed to stun him; but he inclined to the first opinion. Of a further suspicion that he had been drunk at the time of his falling, Mr. Turner said nothing, and did not even surmise that Elizabeth had silently taken it as the base of all the rest.

Mr. Turner's lodging was in a little street tributary to the Rue de France, from which it was a few doors off, and, consequently, very near to the larger of the two English churches. Captain Grove himself had been staying at an hotel in the Place Grimaldi, and had probably been on his way thither when this accident or seizure overcame him. He had been away from Nice, in England, and then in Paris, and had only returned two days before.

The heat of the day had well set in by the time they reached their destination. Mr. Turner, leaving Elizabeth in his little sitting-room, went to apprise the Sister of her coming. As he paused on the landing, Elizabeth heard the suppressed cough, brought on by ascending three flights of stairs. Returning, with a carefully noiseless footstep, he led her across, opened the door, and drew back. Within the room stood a middle-aged Sister of Charity, wearing the immense, white-winged cap with which her life abroad had made Elizabeth familiar. Elizabeth spoke a word or two to her, and went forward to the bed. Captain Grove lay, with one side of his head bandaged, the cheek and orbit of the eye discoloured by bruises, and the upper lip disfigured by a cut. The other profile showed no injury, but the appearance of age seemed to have deepened immeasur-

ably since she saw him, two days before. His eyes were closed, but the fingers, of his hand moved as it lay on the covering.

"Edward," said she, just touching his hand.

The fingers slightly curved to detain hers, and slowly his eyes opened. She had taken off her wide-brimmed hat, and her face leaned towards him full of solicitude.

"Lizzie," murmured he, and closed them again.

A minute or two went by. She fancied that he had fallen asleep, and attempted gently to withdraw her hand. She felt it clutched convulsively, saw his eyes start open, and a look of terror come into his face. He began to speak, hurriedly and low.

"Stay with me. They want to kill me. I know they do. They are coming

after me. You'll take care of me. Don't let *her* come near me. Send her away. She has wings on each side of her head, and when you are not looking, the flames come out of them. Black flames. She makes them come after me."

"I will stay with you; no one shall touch you but me," Elizabeth said, in her soft, low tones, bending a little nearer.

But in the same instant, he threw up both his arms and flung her back from him, shrieking, "You are on fire!"

Elizabeth stood, cold with terror; and the high, sharp voice went on, while his eyes and hands turned themselves this way and that.

"They are coming at me—everywhere. I knew they would. I knew they wanted to burn me. There's another, another! Catch it. It is hiding, in the chimney."

The Sister ran to call Mr. Turner, who came, hastening in, only to depart again as

hastily in quest of Dr. Lemercier. He did not depart, however, till he had prevailed upon Elizabeth to leave the room. "Indeed, Miss Glendinning," said he, very earnestly, "this is not a fit scene for you. I have seen this kind of delirium several times. You cannot possibly do any good, and you may do harm. He will not know you. By-and-by, when he is better, he will want you. You must keep your strength till then."

She obeyed passively, and went to wait in the next room, but the sound of indistinct and terrified ravings reached her even there.

A terrible week followed. She would not yield to her father's wish, and go home to the Villa Nalli. She proposed, at first, to find some lodging near at hand, but Mr. Turner, hearing of her intention, insisted on giving up to her the room in the house which had been allotted him in place of his

own. Major Glendinning, thereupon, sent a polite message by Bannacker that he hoped Mr. Turner would make his home for the present at the villa. This arrangement relieved Elizabeth of much anxiety regarding her father's comfort. The young clergyman seemed, in the course of twenty-four hours, to have become an old and valued friend. The Sister was aided by Mrs. Bannacker, who came down daily and stayed till the night. During the first and wildest days Bannacker also was called into requisition, and, with the proverbial many-sidedness of an old soldier, showed himself the most dexterous sick nurse of the three. By degrees, the delirium subsided, leaving behind a weakness of utter exhaustion and a complete lethargy—as Dr. Lemercier said, "un anéantissement." To the terrors and shrinkings succeeded apathy. Elizabeth sat sometimes for hours by the bedside, waiting for some sign of

recognition that did not come. He lay with closed eyes, most often, she thought, asleep, and never appeared to know who sat beside him, or that any one did so. It was one day while this stage continued that she found the following notice in the second column of the *Times*:—"If Captain Edward Grove, late of —th Regiment, will communicate with Messrs. Hill and Locker, solicitors, 17½, Chancery Lane, he will hear of something to his advantage, he being entitled to a legacy under the will of his late uncle, Sir Edward Grove, of Ballabroom, Lancashire. Any person communicating the present address of the abovementioned, or authentic information of his death, if dead, will be rewarded." She sent the paper to her father, begging him to write; and waited thenceforth all the more anxiously for some token on her lover's part of returning intelligence. She was sure that if once his mind could receive

this new hope, it would much assist his recovery. And, perhaps, an assured income might keep him henceforth in better paths. She had always believed that moderate wealth would have saved him from the degradation of these later years. Perhaps it might even yet be time. He showed on the evening of that day some symptoms of returning strength. Elizabeth, coming in from the half-hour's walk on which the doctor insisted, heard that he had spoken a few words reasonably to the Sister. He was now asleep; and Dr. Lemercier had said that he was likely to wake clear-headed, and that if so he must be spoken to very quietly, and kept calm. Elizabeth took her seat by the bedside and watched all night for that awaking, breathless every time that he moved. A net curtain was strained across the open window to keep out mosquitoes, and the Sister, leaning back in her high armchair, slept.

Captain Grove slumbered on, muttering sometimes, sometimes speaking audible but incoherent words. As far as it was possible to follow the disconnected thoughts, they seemed to point to dreams of England.

Slowly, hour by hour, the night melted away into the morning. The clock ticked to and fro, with an even beating that forced her thoughts to run to its measure. From the bed came the disturbed breathings of the sleeper. The white cap of the Sister threw great shadows on the wall, and Elizabeth, sitting with her hands folded in her lap, watched their flickering shadows as she waited, tired out and sleepless, for what should come next. The grey dawn crept down the edges of the blind. The window-square grew, by untraceable gradations, to a pale, vague patch of light. A bird sang suddenly outside. The curtain of the bed quivered. There came a murmur, from within, a murmur, surely, of "Lily."

Softly she drew back the edge of the curtain, and, bending forward, looked at the sick man with an intense, pitying tenderness. His eyes were fixed straight before him; a strange, vacant smile was on his face, a smile that Elizabeth could not bear to see. Yet, she thought, he looked better, more like himself.

"Edward," said she gently, but with a sharpness of terror in her voice, "Edward!"

He turned, looked at her with no change of face, and said, with a hard, thin distinctness, "Nelly."

Elizabeth started back and dropped the curtain. Her first thought was an ashamed terror lest the Sister should have heard and understood. The Sister was just awakening.

"Ah, il se reveille," she whispered drowsily.

Then there was a moment's pause, and Elizabeth had time to feel that never, in

all the pains of her life, had such a stab come to her as this.

The Sister came softly to the foot of the bed; looked, put her hands together, looked again, turned to Elizabeth, saw her sitting, white as marble, in the corner, and thought that she too understood what was coming.

"Ah, la pauvre ma'amselle!" she said, under her breath, and just touching the cold hand.

Elizabeth looked at her with wide eyes, but with no notion of what she meant to convey.

Suddenly she heard the uneven breath ings again, but changed.

She grasped the Sister's hand.

"C'est la mort?" she asked, her face waking again into dread.

"Ah, oui, ma'amselle. Regardez plutôt."

She drew Elizabeth's reluctant hand. She looked and saw the colours of death

coming, and with them a likeness, never seen before, to Sir Edward Grove.

Through the closed blind came the rose-red lights of sunrise, bringing the new day.

CHAPTER IV.

CONVERGING LINES.

"The ghostly whisper rings between
The sad refrain of 'might have been.'"
Lewis Carroll.

VIOLA had gone back to Newnham. Orlando was busy with his cottages. Duncannon was advancing with his work, and Mr. and Mrs. Haverdike were delighted with the painting, the painter, and the painter's wife. But Duncannon could not work solely at Sherborne. The cartoons which he had brought with him were not so many as the whole number of panels, and neither models nor costumes were to be had away from London. Sometimes he and Julia would be absent for a week

or more at a time, and Orlando, during these absences, found himself extremely lonely. He realized, as he had never done before, the vacancy in his own life. He had not felt solitude painful, but, having once tasted the delight of satisfying company, he could not return to solitude. He looked forward with hope to the idea of Viola's possible return. He had found in her a most congenial companion, and caught himself wishing, more than once, for her opinion upon questions of difficulty. His feeling towards her had not a trace of the heart-shaken devotion which Elizabeth had inspired in him. In fact, he thought less about Viola, as Viola, when he was in her presence than when he was absent from her. While she spoke, his attention was absorbed upon the subject and matter of her speech; her individuality only made itself felt in the brighter and clearer atmosphere which seemed to radiate

from her, making the world worthier of interest, healthier, more hopeful. She produced, he said to himself, the same effect that a keen-witted, healthy-souled lad might have done; only, being a woman, she had a more delicate quickness than could have belonged to a boy. These were Orlando's thoughts; but a young man's thoughts on such a subject, even when he supposes himself to have attained the wisdom of age, are not of necessity correct.

The early weeks of summer had gone. June was deepening and thickening the greenness of the woods. The thought was beginning to stir in Orlando's memory that the Long Vacation was at hand; and, having that memory in his mind, his speech not unnaturally followed the same line, and at Duncannon's cottage the same evening the words 'Long Vacation' arose in his talk.

Julia took the subject up at once, and said, "Yes; Viola was going home on Wednesday."

"She is not going to take you on her way back, then?"

Julia said "No," and said nothing more, having a proud fear lest it might be said or thought that she had thrown her young sister in a rich man's path.

She did not communicate this fear to her husband, feeling very certain that he would laugh at her; and Duncannon, if he had any private thoughts on the matter, was equally discreet.

Towards the end of that week, however, Orlando went to town, as he said, for a few days. The few days drew themselves out into many, and they heard that he had called in Gower Street, and was putting himself under Mrs. Cash's instruction in regard to Board Schools. Hitherto he had rather avoided London at that season

of the year in which he would be liable to see the greenness of early summer on the trees of the Park Crescent and Regent's Park Gardens. But time was gradually blunting the edge of remembrance. He said to Millie, on the first day of his coming, that his old fancy for London was beginning to lay hold on him again.

"I am glad of it," said Millie. "If you sat for the county, you would have to be here a good many months of the year."

"That will not be just yet, if ever, Millie. But I do think that, if you and Gilbert can have me, I will take a holiday and perform the part of country cousin for a few weeks. Does Gilbert care as much as ever for the river?"

"Oh yes; but he says nobody pulls as well with him as you do, which he takes to be the result of your Cambridge training."

Orlando smiled, well pleased, for he had

considerable respect for Gilbert's judgment on such a point, and rather believed, himself, that he did row well. Now, for these five years or so, it had been the increasing desire of Millie's heart to see her brother suitably married. She had often felt and said that it really was almost Orlando's *duty* to marry, and that she was quite sure, by her own experience—and Gilbert said the same—that marriage was the happiest condition.

"Yes, Millie," her brother would answer, "I quite believe that, too; and when anybody cares as much for me as you do for Gilbert, I'll consider."

"But you never asked anybody," said Millie on one occasion.

To that accusation, Orlando allowed his silence to plead guilty.

But now Millie began to suspect that Orlando had not been, all this time, so heart-free as she had supposed. His

unconscious tendency to quote Miss Cash's views and sayings did not escape her; and when, on the very second day of his stay, he went to call in Gower Street, she became convinced within herself that he had nourished a secret admiration, all these years, for the youngest Miss Cash, and had, very likely, been only waiting till she was old enough to know her own mind. Viola was not, indeed, the wife whom she, for her own part, would have chosen. It would have been much more desirable if he could have managed to fall in love with Ida or Maudie. Still she knew that complete satisfaction is not to be looked for by sisters in such matters, and she prepared herself to make Viola welcome. She had never seen her, but had once met Mrs. Duncannon, and had inclined to like her, and had seen another sister at a concert, and had been sure that she should like her very much. She would

not say a word to Orlando of her suspicions — certainly not; but she would endeavour to cultivate the friendship of Miss Cash.

A day or two later, therefore, she said to her brother in a natural and unpremeditated manner, "Orlando, Mr. Woodman is staying in London, and Gilbert wants me to ask him to dinner."

"Oh, old Woodman," said Orlando with a pleased smile. "I am glad I happened to be here."

Mr. Woodman had been Orlando's tutor as well as Gilbert's, and had attained some degree of fame, since then, in that road of fame whose milestones are annotated editions of Greek plays.

"I was thinking," pursued Millie, "that I might ask Mrs. Cash and her daughters to meet him: you see, Miss Cash, being at Cambridge, might very likely know him."

"Fancy old Woodman lecturing through his spectacles to a class of pretty girls!" said Orlando, from which Millie inferred that Miss Cash was pretty.

"Yes, do ask them, Millie," he added, when his enjoyment of this fancy had subsided. "I am sure you would like to know them. And Viola—what a trick one gets of using the name one hears used by other people! I mean, Miss Cash —is just the sort of girl who would know how to talk to Woodman. You might ask Uncle Charles, if you want any one else."

"Yes, that is just what I thought of doing. But now, Orlando, you will have to take me to call on Mrs. Cash."

"Certainly; whenever you please," Orlando rejoined, with great alacrity.

The visit was duly made, but Millie's wish of seeing Viola was not gratified. They saw, however, Mrs. Cash, Cecily,

Silvia, and Silvia's two children; and Millie having started with a desire to like the whole family, if she possibly could, was able to go home expressing the opinion that they were all extremely nice. But in her heart of hearts she hoped that Viola might prove to resemble Silvia rather than Cecily. She sent an invitation for Mrs. Cash and one of her daughters, in due form, the next day. An answer was returned which exactly suited her views. Mrs. Cash and Miss Viola Cash accepted with great pleasure.

Millie had long passed that stage of hostesship in which a small dinner-party, such as this, could cause nervousness; yet when the evening came, and the time approached for the arrival of her guests, she showed a certain agitation. Until she had seen Viola's face and dress she could not be easy. She had lurking doubts of the compatibility of female learning with a good

taste in dress. It was impossible to give her thoughts heartily to any other subject while she was expecting every moment the announcement of Viola's name. At last the announcement came, and Viola followed her mother into the room. Her dress was of a soft, lavender-tinted grey, fitting rather closely to her figure, cut square in front, and with sleeves that reached the elbow. Millie gave a little sigh of relief. All was as it should be. She bore no signs in her face or in her dress of knowing more Greek than might be derived from the advertisements in railway stations. Orlando, too, looked at her with pleasure. He was not, just now, observant of his own mood, or he might have discovered that the pleasure had an element of difference from that which he would have regarded an equally intelligent youth. Her quick eye had at once discerned Mr. Woodman, and Orlando per-

ceived that she recognized him. The recognition was mutual. Mr. Woodman, after a moment advanced, shook hands with her, and hoped that Miss Cash was enjoying the leisure of the vacation.

"Yes, thank you," she answered, smiling. "But I enjoy the work of the term very much too, and am never at all sorry when the vacation is over."

"You do not, I trust, work much in the vacation? Young ladies, you know, are fragile; you should not overtax your strength, Miss Cash."

The odd contrast between the old man, dry, thin, and work-worn, and the well-knit, young figure, clear eyes, and healthily tinted skin of the girl, gave a touch of grotesque to the warning. Viola made some pretty little, gently serious answer; then Mr. Woodman drew back, for Millie was introducing Mrs. Cash and her daughter to the fourth lady of the party, a Mrs.

Brattle, elderly, stout, and an old friend. Millie's own mind was a little perturbed by the unpunctuality of Mr. Pelham; the clock had stirred itself to strike—it really was rather too bad of Uncle Charles not to be here. In this anxiety she gave no heed to her brother until Mr. Pelham had arrived and every one was duly seated at table. Orlando and Viola were together, and both appeared well satisfied. The sisterly eye of Millie discerned a happier keenness in Orlando's face, a more frequent smile, a greater readiness and brightness of speech. In so small a party, the conversation could hardly be other than general; but Orlando, more than once, turned to Viola with that tone of appeal, natural, habitual, and certain of response, which makes the most eloquent witness of inner and assured alliance. Viola's own contributions were slight, pleasant, and in a very marked degree unassuming. She listened,

with a bright light in her face, to the college reminiscences of Mr. Woodman, but was careful to keep herself from being included in mere university gossip, from which Millie, Mrs. Brattle, and her mother must be shut out. Millie, watching, began to think that, after all, she gave no token of particular cleverness, and was merely a fresh, bright girl, with a pleasant, spontaneous manner. Nor was she, she thought, very pretty. Wherein lay the charm that had delighted Orlando, when so many other women, no less clever and very much prettier, had failed? Mr. Woodman, too, seemed inclined to address himself rather especially to her. Millie could hardly understand it, and began to ascribe to Viola the admittedly mysterious and inscrutable qualities which make a 'man's beauty.'

But by-and-by, when they were in the drawing-room, it was Millie's turn to

experience the same attraction. Mrs. Brattle and Mrs. Cash were engaged in a discourse upon some domestic social topic, and Millie devoted herself to entertaining Viola. The first stage of liking came with the discovery that she was easy to be entertained; she was responsive, showed interest in what was said to her, and spoke simply and pleasantly of ordinary things without herself being ordinary. When she spoke, when she smiled, when she listened with bright intentness, her charm became undeniable. And, after all, was she not pretty? Millie, having once fallen under the charm, found it, as her brother had done, quite impossible not to go on watching and becoming more and more drawn towards her. Some months later, when she was reading the newly published volume of 'Daniel Deronda,' from a copy belonging to Orlando, she found this passage marked by a pencil-mark running

down the margin: "The most powerful beauty is that which reveals itself after sympathy and not before it. There is a charm of eye and lip which comes with every little phrase that certifies delicate perception and fine judgment, with every unostentatious word or smile that shows a heart awake to others; and no sweep of garment or turn of figure is more satisfying than that which enters as a restorative of confidence that one person is present on whom no intention will be lost." Millie was quite sure, as she read those lines, of whom her brother had been thinking when he emphasized them thus.

Presently she discovered other virtues, among them an interest in crewel-work for which she had not dared to hope. They were still upon this theme, when Orlando came in with his uncle and Mr. Woodman. Viola was sitting in a rather lower chair at Millie's side, and was explain

ing, by example, some process of tracing patterns.

"That is the way my brother-in-law does his cartoons," she was saying, "or rather, the way Julia does them for him."

Orlando came round to look. Mr. Woodman, too, found his way to that corner. Gilbert, who had delayed a moment to open an important letter, drew aside Mr. Pelham, that they might fight out a political debate.

"But that is not how you do your own designs," said Orlando to Viola. "I have seen you draw them with a pencil as you go on."

"Oh, that is my laziness. I like to work from the real thing, and just draw a guiding line or two. But you could not draw with a pencil on this dark silk."

"A lady whom I know at Cambridge is always urging me to work in crewels," Mr. Woodman remarked. "She assures me

that it is the only kind of employment which really rests the brain, because it requires just so much attention as prevents you from thinking of other things. It is said that her husband, an extremely learned man, and an old friend of mine, embroidered all the chairs in their drawing-room."

His hearers laughed, and Viola said, with a little air of meditation, "I rather think she is right; and I am sure that, if you are inclined to follow her advice, any of your pupils at Newnham would feel honoured by being allowed to instruct you."

Mr. Woodman, smiling rather grimly, shook his head. "I am afraid it would be rather late in the day, Miss Cash. I fear my fingers would scarcely now acquire the needful dexterity and lissomness. The offer is very tempting, but I think I must content myself with my pipe

—our poor masculine substitute for such graceful labours."

"It used to be a very melodious pipe in my days," said Orlando; and the old man smiled graciously, pleased at this recollection of his flute.

"Ah, I have given that up, of late years, Sherborne. But I was very much attached to my flute. It is a great companion to a lonely man. You don't play any instrument, I think, yourself?"

"No," answered Orlando, unsuspicious of the remembrance which prompted the words.

"Not even the key-bugle?" suggested Mr. Woodman.

Orlando laughed, and Millie looked up inquiringly.

"Your brother, Mrs. Oakes, was supposed to be the undergraduate who enlivened the tedium of college life by exact imitations, on his voice, of the calls of a key-bugle."

A confessing smile on Orlando's part confirmed the supposition.

"Ah, we hear from you a true account of Orlando's behaviour at college. I am sure I hope he won't teach Charlie to utter bugle-calls."

"I am happy to say that I don't think it could be taught," said Mr. Woodman. "It remained unique, and I am sure that imitation would have arisen, if imitation had been possible. I think it must be considered a lost art."

"And it had its advantages too, Millie," Orlando assured his sister. "It was a useful as well as an elegant accomplishment. I quite regret having lost it."

"And you always gave us to understand that you were such an exemplary young man at college," said Millie.

"So I was. I am sure my memory must be cherished still. I never hurt any man's feelings by outshining him."

Viola looked up rather quickly and opened her lips to speak; then stopping short, she looked suddenly down again, and for the first time in Orlando's knowledge of her seemed confused and coloured a little. For a minute or so she was silent, and let the others talk without her. Then she looked up again, and took her part as brightly as before. The acutest observer would hardly have guessed how sudden and surprising a knowledge had come home to her in that brief interval.

Very soon afterwards, the two elder ladies showed signs of finishing their debate; Millie moved towards them and amalgamated the two groups into one. Then Mr. Pelham, having said all that he cared to say to Gilbert, moved deliberately across to Viola and entered into conversation. Mr. Pelham's conversation partook of the nature of monologue, and was generally addressed either to a single

docile listener or to a collected audience, whom he treated as one individual. Millie saw that he remained by Viola's side, and knew that he would not have done so if he had not found her a good listener. He was the last of her guests to leave, and she took the opportunity of privately asking him, before he went away, what he thought of Miss Cash. He, with a slight smile and observant glance, aware of all the thoughts which she fancied so well hidden, answered—

"I think whatever you do, which, as you know, does not happen to us very often."

Millie was too much engaged in considering what this might mean to make any further inquiry. The question and answer had passed at the moment of her uncle's departure, and she came back to Orlando and Gilbert, looking completely puzzled. But she was not allowed time to reflect upon the riddle, for Gilbert, coming to sit by her, said at once—

"Millie, I have had a letter from Elizabeth."

"Yes. Why, what is it, Gilbert? Is anything the matter?"

Orlando looked up, no less anxious.

"Her father is dead," said Gilbert, putting the letter into Millie's hands.

"Oh, Gilbert!" said she, her eyes filling with easy-coming tears.

Orlando said nothing, but turned pale, the usual token with him of emotion.

"I suppose you will go out to her? Perhaps we had both better go," said Millie, slowly.

"Read what she says. She seems as if she really would rather be alone. You see, Bannacker and his wife are there. What do you really think? You see, she says she only wants rest and quiet, and that when she feels stronger she will come home slowly with Mrs. Bannacker. I think, if you will write to her, Millie, it will perhaps

be best. Tell her that of course she must come to us, the sooner the better. And if she feels the least wish for us, let her telegraph at once. Poor Lizzie! it is a worn-out, weary-hearted sort of letter."

Millie, with a sigh, gave it back.

"I wonder whether she is still thinking about that horrid Captain Grove. I can't help it, Gilbert; I *am* glad he is dead. We will nurse her up and make much of her, when once we get her here. Dear Lizzie, she has always had to look after other people."

She went to a writing-table. Orlando had stepped out upon the wide balcony, with its spaces of dark sky above the lights of London. The slender crescent of the moon, white and thin, like worn silver, stood high, but shed but little light. Presently Gilbert too came out.

"Poor Lizzie!" said he, after they had been standing a moment or so in silence.

"Was Major Glendinning's death very sudden?" asked Orlando.

"Death is always sudden, I think. He had been ill, you know, these four years, sometimes more, sometimes less. One hardly seemed to look for any change. I am thankful to think she is coming home."

Millie's voice from within called "Gilbert!" and Gilbert, pushing aside the curtain, went in.

Orlando stood still upon the balcony, leaning on the balustrade, looking down upon the dark tree-tops, the moving lights, the comings and goings, the stir and motion of the town. He heard the rattling wheels, the shriek of trains, the deep-voiced hum of the city coming up from below. Far away, Elizabeth was sitting fatherless and a stranger. Whatever new hopes and new faces had come into his life, there was none strong enough as yet to turn that remembrance pale.

CHAPTER V.

SELF-CONFESSED.

"Said Sir Gawaine, Is that knight that owneth the shield your love?
Yea, truly, said she, my love he is; God would I were his love!"

Morte d'Arthur.

VIOLA sat with her mother and Silvia the next morning. She was less quietly self-possessed than usual. Her colour came and went. A sudden word made her start; more than once she showed that she had not heard what was said. She herself took hardly any part in their conversation. She was working, embroidering from a wreath of bryony lying, in a little water, on a large plate, but it was not her work which engaged her thoughts.

For the first time her feelings had stolen a march upon her; she had been taken by surprise, and she could not yet become reconciled to her changed self. The past presented itself in new colours; that which had been a trifling part of the future had become of most absorbing interest, and many hopes, important hitherto, dwindled into matters of small account. What was she to Orlando? Did he think of her as she of him? Who could decide? Certainly not Viola. She could only tell herself that henceforth she must never again utter outspoken praise, like that which had grown silent on her lips last night, and revealed her to herself. She felt that it would be difficult to her ever to speak of him again. How could she do so without deception? Then she heard his name spoken between her mother and sister.

"It is always pleasant to me to be in the same room with Mr. Sherborne, if it is

only for the sake of hearing his voice," said Silvia. "I know no one with so agreeable a voice."

"It is quite a pity," said her mother, smiling, "that it should not belong to a clergyman or a lecturer. Mr. Sherborne really has no special need for a voice that makes people listen to him."

"But if he goes into parliament," said Viola, quickly.

"Does he think of it?" asked her mother, looking up with interest.

"I believe so, by-and-by," Viola answered.

"He has altered very much since we knew him first, has he not?" said Silvia again, after a minute or two.

"Yes; I never thought he would do so much. There was a certain easy, pleasant, almost over-refined manner about him that was likely enough to degenerate into mere agreeable indolence."

They passed to other topics. Viola's mind remained upon the one. She grew restless; her work did not satisfy her. She would go and meet Cecily, who would be coming home from a lesson in the Primrose Hill district. She started; and, as she went on, her thoughts cleared. To free thought, as to a beginning friendship, walking is propitious. She began to understand herself, and to see her way. She must be a little less frank and direct, henceforth, than nature and custom had taught her to be, hitherto. Until now, she had been pleased to meet Mr. Sherborne, and had shown her pleasure openly. But now she felt herself shrink back. There must be nothing like seeking on her part; nor must any living creature be suffered to guess at what was in her heart; not her mother, not Silvia, not Cecily.

A slight colour rose into her face at the recollection that Orlando was wealthy, and

of a rank that would be held higher than her own. Such considerations as these she regarded in the abstract as quite unworthy to be balanced in a case of love; but their recollection sharpened her pride. She felt, at the moment, as if she would be glad to escape from the place where she was likely to meet him. If she were away, —then, if he came after her, that would be different. As to his being in London for the sake of seeing her, it was mere vanity which could suggest such an idea. What was more natural than that he should be here with his own people—in the season, too? Thus she said to herself, reproving her hopes. But they were rebellious, and would not be entirely suppressed.

She met Cecily, and Cecily noticed something unusual in her sister's appearance, but could not exactly determine its character.

"You are not unwell, are you, Viola?"

she said presently, in a pause of their talk.

"Oh dear, no; what makes you ask?"

Viola was almost defiant; and Cecily replied, more meekly than usual, "I don't know; I thought you did not look quite right. It is not a sin to be ill, you know."

They reached home, and one of the first sounds which came to Viola's ears was that of Orlando's voice. She felt herself turn red, and thanked the dim light of the entrance hall for covering her blushes. She was angry with herself for an emotion which she mentally denoted 'imbecile,' and walked upstairs, scolding herself. But, once in her own room, she feared to come down again. How could she, in this absurd state, answer for what her face might betray? She was actually trembling; it was too idiotic. A murmured quotation came to her lips, concerning 'the soft and milky rabble of womankind.' Then the

comic side of her dismay struck her, and she laughed at herself. With the laugh came courage, and she went down, to all appearance, undisturbed.

Orlando had brought a note from Millie to Silvia. Viola saw the note later, and in her unsuspicious heart did not conceive any notion of diplomacy on the part of its writer.

"Dear Mrs. Markwick,

"I am afraid I made an omission, yesterday, in asking your little boy to spend the day with Charlie to-morrow. I did not say anything to Mrs. Cash about their going to play in the Park Crescent Gardens, of which we have the key, and which are Charlie's favourite play-place. I remember that you said your little boy had had a cough. Should you be afraid for him to spend the afternoon out of doors? I know I am a fidget about my

own flock, and would not for worlds expose your dear little boy to taking cold. With kind regards, very sincerely yours,

"Millicent Oakes."

Silvia had already assured Orlando that she had no fears, and that little Charlie (for the children were namesakes) had quite recovered from his cold. When Viola came in, the conversation had wandered far from that starting-point, and was dealing with current political questions. Viola was thankful to find that she could speak and bear herself in much the ordinary manner. She drew her plate of bryony towards her, and continued her embroidering.

"You express my view so ably," Mrs. Cash said, resuming her conversation, "that I can only hope to see you expounding it 'in another place.'"

"How do you know my secret ambition?" asked Orlando, smiling.

"Viola said something about it, and I could not but feel that I should very much like to see you in parliament. There's a great lack of uncrotchety intelligence there."

Orlando had looked across to Viola with a bright light in his face. Her thoughts of his future harmonized, then, with his own. Some dim notion of Numa and Egeria floated through his brain. Viola's glance did not reply; she was bending over her flowers. Orlando felt that, unless she looked up and spoke, his visit would be unsatisfactory. He drew a little nearer, and fixing his eyes upon her work, said, "You are resting your brain, I see."

She smiled, looked up, and said, "Yes."

This should surely have been enough; but her attention went back to her embroidery, and the desire to draw it to himself again returned.

"I may hope that you would vote

for me, then, Miss Cash, if you had a vote?"

The speech was not like Orlando's. Viola felt, disliked, and knew not to what to attribute the *falsetto.*

"Oh yes—if you represented my views, and my voting district."

At this point Cecily came in, and seemed to bring fresh air with her.

"Oh, Mr. Sherborne," said she, "have you come to ask me about your book? I am ashamed to say I have not quite finished it. *Can* you let me have it a little longer?"

"Please keep it as long as you like. I did not come with any thought of it at all. But I hope you are not reading it to the end from a feeling of obligation."

"No, indeed," said Cecily, not without indignation. "But I have very little time; and Browning won't bear reading when one is tired, and cannot give full attention.

I believe Viola has read it three or four times already; and Silvia, who does not generally care very much for Browning, is enraptured by 'Any Wife to any Husband.'"

"Does Mrs. Markwick know the transcription of 'Alcestis'?" asked Orlando.

It was said to Cecily, for Silvia was writing her note of reply to Millie; but she looked up to answer herself.

"Oh yes; it is beautiful; but, then, I thought the beauty belonged to Euripides. Viola said so."

"Surely—did I, Silvia?"

"It was before you had read 'Balaustion,'" Silvia admitted.

"I thought I had heard you defending Browning against your brother-in-law," said Orlando to Viola.

"In his heart, I believe, Harry admires him as much as we do, else why do the quotations come up so often? Oh yes;

Cecily and I are hearty believers in Browning."

"So sincere," added Cecily, "that we don't feel it necessary to run down any one else in order to exalt him."

Mrs. Cash and Orlando laughed, and the discussion was closed for that time. Silvia's note was given to Orlando, who soon after took his departure; but not before he had said, a little abruptly, to Viola, "I have been to the architect this morning about the plans for my school. I am to have them in about ten days. May I bring them in for you to see?"

"Oh, do, please; we shall be so much interested. Mamma, do you hear what Mr. Sherborne is saying? There is a prospect of some more school-plans for you to study."

"What! you have come to the plans already, Mr. Sherborne? I thought you did not propose to build until next year."

"I cannot have the ground until September, but I thought it was a good opportunity to get the plans out while I was making some stay up here."

"You are going to stay on in London, then?" said Cecily. "Harry declared you had taken a vow against it."

"I? Oh no; I am rather fond of London when I have time to spare, and I really have earned a holiday now. Don't you think I have, Mrs. Cash?"

"Yes, indeed I do. Do you conscientiously measure out your work and your holiday-time?" asked Mrs. Cash, smiling, as she shook hands with him.

The afternoon went on quietly enough; it seemed to Viola very long, and like the first day among strange surroundings. Her embroidery became unendurable to her; she fetched her Greek books, and set herself resolutely to work. That helped the time until the tea hour, and the most trying portion of the day was gone.

While they were at tea, Duncannon came in. He was a little less jubilant than usual; his work was progressing, indeed, but he could not satisfy himself in it. Suddenly, as Viola was standing with her arm raised, to replace a book upon a shelf, he exclaimed, "Why, there it is! Viola, when are you coming to Sherborne?"

Viola turned round, and asked, colouring a little, "What do you mean?"

"Your figure is the very thing I want. I have been looking for a good model all the morning. Come down, and stand to me for Elaine."

"Surely, Harry, I am not like Elaine?"

"Not in face, my child; but your tall, slight figure will just suit me. I shall put off Elaine until you come."

"Oh, I will come now, if you like. I don't mean this moment, but to-morrow, if Julia can have me."

"Will you? But don't you want to stay up here?"

"No. I was just thinking I should like a change. I could go to Sherborne to-morrow, could not I, mamma?"

"Yes, dear, easily, if you are inclined. I should like you to have some of your holiday—I beg your pardon, your vacation—in the country. If Harry and Julia can have you, I shall be glad to hand you over."

"Very well, Harry; if to-morrow morning you don't telegraph to the contrary, I shall come down. You need not trouble about meeting me—unless, indeed, you can get some one to fetch my modest trunk. As I don't expect that, I shall come like Mrs. Elton, 'with a little basket hanging on my arm.'"

"All right," said Duncannon; "I'll report accordingly. I don't think you need expect a telegram. Any other message for Julia, beyond the general love?"

Viola felt much relieved when this decision had been made. A quiet week or two at Sherborne seemed, just now, the repose for which her soul longed. The daily and hourly possibility of meeting Orlando was painfully disturbing. But he, he said, was going to stay in London, and she would surely not meet him again before to-morrow afternoon. In this assurance she was, however, mistaken. They were now in the early days of July, and it happened that there was not in the house a railway guide for the new month. She went out, therefore, to the neighbouring terminus, to make certain of her train. She had not gone many steps when she saw Orlando, coming from north to south, towards her. She was walking quickly, and putting on her gloves as she walked, and when they met she gave him her ungloved hand with a little air of surprise.

"Do you know," said he, "that it was almost on this very piece of pavement that I saw you first?"

"No, was it? I don't remember."

"No, I did not suppose you would. And you had no gloves on then."

"Oh, you know, then, that they all laugh at me for that old bad habit. I learned it when I used to go only a street's length to school. But I don't know that it is so bad a habit. I think I shall write a defence of putting on one's gloves in the street."

"I think you must have been going to school when I saw you; you had a strapful of books."

"I don't know; I have forgotten. I suppose it must have been when I was going up for the Senior Local."

"Before that, I think. You wore your hair hanging down."

The brown eyes looked meditative.

"Oh, before I went to Germany for the first time. Why, I must have been about fourteen."

"Yes, I dare say you were."

"I wonder that you remember it."

"I had reason to remember the day—on other grounds," he answered, with a little change of countenance.

She, at this point, made a motion to continue her road.

Orlando, turning, asked, "May I walk a little way with you?" and they walked on together.

"I have just come from the station here," said he again; "I have been down in the City all the morning."

"I should have thought Portland Road would have been your station," said Viola.

"Yes, but I am going to see a man in High Holborn," he answered, rather quickly.

Was it possible, she asked herself, that

he could imagine she had meant to hint a suspicion of his coming that way on her account? But it would be unlike him to think uncharitably of other people, or with vanity of himself. And in any case how stupid it was to be wondering in this way what he thought.

And now, as they reached the end of Gower Street, she stopped, and looking up with her natural, frank smile, bade him turn back.

"Really, you must not come any farther out of your way. You will be late for luncheon at your sister's."

So they shook hands and parted, and Orlando went about his business in High Holborn with no suspicion that Viola intended to take flight from Gower Street that afternoon.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE TIME OF NIGHTINGALES.

"*Lucile.* Et depuis son retour
Il nous vient visiter une ou deux fois par jour.
Laure. Qu'est ce que cela prouve?
Lucile. Oh! rien. Deux jeunes filles
Ont dix-huit et vingt ans et passent pour gentilles;
Un jeune homme étranger vient chez elles souvent,
Ce n'est que pour parler de la pluie et du vent."
Ponsard, 'L'Honneur et l'Argent.'

It was a still, sunny afternoon. Duncannon and Viola were alone in the long, light dining-hall of the Haverdikes' new house. The walls presented a strange, incomplete appearance. At one end was the finished panel, representing King Arthur's coronation—a really fine picture, with only the blemish of newness upon it. At the opposite end, outlined in black and white, but

not yet painted in, was the design for the last act of the drama—the dying king, borne on the shoulders of his last remaining knight, and before them the black barge, and the three queens with extended arms. The earlier spring-time and summer-time panels were nearly finished; the autumnal and winter ones stood blank. About the room were standing strange apparatus, platforms, screens, an easel or two, and large stretchers, upon which the cartoons were fixed; mysterious draperies and bits of armour; a pile of great books, the uppermost lying open, and showing an engraving of antique jewellery. Among all this stood Viola at one end of the room, her face turned towards the wall, and showing little more than its right cheek. She wore a quaint, half-classic, half-mediæval gown. Her bright, light-brown hair, unfastened from its usual style, hung in a thick stream across her left shoulder to her waist, and

was bound by a gilt circlet, which held it in place below and pushed it into rebellious waves above. Her hands, arranged in such a fashion that the partly bare right arm formed a most graceful line, rested upon what should have been Lancelot's shield, but was—alas, for romance!—a tea-tray. Putting aside this anachronism, the girl's figure made as charming a picture as could be desired, and Duncannon, painting away at the distance of several yards, was well satisfied with his model.

They hardly spoke. Earlier in the afternoon Duncannon had been telling—led, as it seemed to both of them, by chance—of his Welsh journeying with Orlando. Then had followed much praise, derived from later knowledge here in Sherborne. Duncannon had the nature of a thorough-going partisan; the good qualities of his friends, and the faults of his enemies, presented

themselves to him in good, clear black and white, so that Orlando was duly exalted in his description, and Viola could listen with great satisfaction.

Towards the close of the sitting, however, conversation had flagged. The painter's whole attention had become absorbed by his work. Viola, too, growing tired of her fatiguing employment -more exhausting in its enforced immobility than hard work—had lapsed into silence, and was recalling Orlando's praises with slow, ruminating pleasure. Presently came interruption. One of the doors of the room was opened softly, and Viola heard Julia's voice.

"Mr. Sherborne wants to know whether he may come in and see how you are getting on."

"Sherborne! Oh yes; let him come in."

Then the door creaked again; a fresh step was heard, and the two men greeted each other.

Viola still stood motionless, and asked, without turning her head, "Are you going on, Harry, or may I move?"

"Oh, five minutes more, please, Viola. I shall never get your dress just the same again. Will you wait a minute, you two? You'll find a lot of books if you'll sit down in that corner."

They sat down obediently, but Orlando did not devote his attention to the books. Viola, as Elaine, was a much more interesting example of costume. His eyes were fascinated by that smooth-waving, golden-brown mass of hair, whose loose ends were growing used to freedom and beginning to assert their right to curl. It would have afforded him the keenest pleasure to draw it through his hands—if it might only be done without her knowledge. Next, he desired that she would turn round. And this, being a wish within the bounds of reason, was presently gratified. Duncan-

non painted his last stroke, laid down his brush reluctantly, and set his model free. Turning promptly, she came down the long room, her left hand holding her mock shield and raising her long skirt, her right free to give Orlando. To him her appearance was eminently satisfying; to herself there was an uncomfortable feeling of being untidy and but half dressed.

"You put us all out of date," said he.

"I can assure you that I feel very much out of date myself—rather as if I had come down to breakfast without doing my hair."

"You did not tell me you were coming to Sherborne," said Orlando again, with a slight inflection of reproach in his voice.

"And you did not tell me *you* were coming," she returned, smiling.

To that, Orlando had no reply, and she, holding out Lancelot's shield (and in that action suggesting to her practical and

artistic sister a useful modification of the domestic caryatid, who hitherto bears only lamps), continued, "Here, Julia; I have taken great care of your tray, and preserved it watchfully from Harry's painty fingers."

Julia received the tray, and Viola slipped away to exchange the garb of Elaine for that of the nineteenth century.

She came back looking like herself, and like herself in her happiest mood. To Orlando's eyes the glamour still hung about her.

At the moment of her reappearance, Duncannon was exclaiming in an emphatic manner. Turning to her, he said, "Why, Viola, you and Sherborne have been conspiring. He has been saying just what you say."

"Not at all, Harry. It is only that the beauties and the defects of your work are patent to any unprejudiced eye," Viola

replied lightly. And coming to stand at her brother-in-law's elbow, she inquired into the details of Mr. Sherborne's opinion.

Orlando, on his part, preferred to think that their agreement was a matter of inner sympathy, but prudently refrained from saying so. Before leaving, he paused to look attentively at the work in progress. Julia made some slight remark upon the details of execution, and appealed to him. He almost started; his mind had been intent upon no artistic criticism, but upon the flow of Viola's hair.

The four walked down together to that temporary home which had become dear in these few months, not only to Duncannon and Julia, but also to Viola and Orlando. Julia, who had been rather silent, and had looked a little grave, regained her usual cheerfulness. She had been weighing in her mind the relation of Orlando to her sister, and had resolved to

resign any further attempt at ungracious prudence. After all, if Mr. Sherborne chose to go to London when Viola was there, and come back into the country as soon as Viola was here, it would be of very little avail that she should take upon herself the uncongenial part of a duenna. When, therefore, Orlando begged to be allowed to carry her tray, she yielded it smilingly, and permitted herself to say, "I have not Viola's great objection to having my burdens carried for me."

"Is the objection founded on principle?" Orlando asked, looking across to Viola.

"I like to think so, but my natural contradictoriness has something to do with it."

"I remember," observed Duncannon, "that the first time I saw you, you snubbed me severely for offering to carry your school-books for you."

"Did I? I am very sorry; but you

must own that you have had ample retaliation since."

"I have become resigned of late years," said he, looking up with a keen smile and brightening eyes at the blueness of the sky, crossed by the light, bright leaves.

This intense under-depth of delight in all natural beauty was perhaps the fundamental likeness rendering explicable the friendship between himself and Orlando in many outward ways so unlike. As they turned in at the garden gate Orlando perceived upon the well-known lawn certain diagrammatic markings in white chalk.

"Lawn-tennis?" said he, interrogatively.

"Yes," replied Duncannon; "can you play?"

"In a degree."

"A superlative or only a comparative degree? Viola is too strong for us, and we should hail with joy any ally who would defeat her, or at least equalize the powers."

"I am afraid that is hardly likely. I did not graduate at Newnham."

"We will hope, all the same," said Julia, no longer restraining her natural inclination to make her guest welcome. And reclaiming her tea-tray she went smiling into the kitchen, to bid Sarah hasten tea and provide for one consumer more.

Orlando fancied that the arrangements of this little dining-room had a gracefulness which was wanting in the far handsomer rooms of his own house. He looked round and wondered wherein the difference lay. Surely the basket of flowers hanging in the window, and the climbing roses nodding in across the window-frame, could not suffice to produce so marked an effect. It appeared to him that the very cups and saucers had a more genial expression than his own. Presently Viola took her seat opposite to him at the table, and he left off observing the room. Her presence made

an atmosphere of completion, in which he felt himself altogether at ease. It might have been curious to know what answer he would have given if he had been suddenly challenged to define his feeling towards her. He certainly would not have declared at once that he was in love with her, for he had been in love with Elizabeth, and this affection was entirely different from what he had felt then. He might, perhaps, have said that she inspired him with the fullest and most satisfying friendship which he had ever known. There was, he thought, no question upon which he would have been afraid to speak the truth to her, or doubtful of receiving from her a comprehending and truthful reply.

As for Viola, complete and unreflective happiness had returned. Until to-day she had been oppressed by gravity ever since that moment of self-revelation in Mrs. Oakes's drawing-room. But now the yoke

was lifted; she felt herself once more free and at ease, and was content not to seek into her heart for causes.

They went out, presently, to lawn-tennis. The game was yet too new for the various accessories of lawn-tennis dresses, aprons, and pockets which have since grown up. Duncannon, however, produced a pale-blue flannel cap, which he handled very tenderly and proceeded to put on.

"What an odd cap!" said Orlando. "How did you come by it? How was it made, and who invented it?"

"I came by it through the munificence and ingenuity of my accomplished sister-in-law here. How it was made I do not precisely know, nor to whom the invention is due, but as a cap for lawn-tennis it leaves nothing to be desired." He fitted it on as he spoke, and it formed a close skull-cap which no stooping or sudden motion could dislodge.

"It is a 'Capitolaine bandage,'" explained Viola. "Willie Miller, who used to be a pupil of Julia's, and who is a medical student, was staying with us, and would practise bandaging upon all our heads. Cecily suggested that they should play football in these bandages by way of caps, and the bright idea occurred to me to make one in flannel for lawn-tennis. Harry wanted to have it in Oxford blue, but that I naturally could not allow."

"Does it take much flannel?" asked Orlando.

Duncannon began to laugh.

"I thought you would want one too; but I don't think you could possibly make one for yourself. The original bandaging is rather a long operation, but, with care, it keeps its shape perfectly. I dare say Viola will make one for you."

"Certainly, if you like," said Viola, colouring just a little. "It is a useful

knowledge to keep up, and I have not made one now for a long time."

"Oh, but not now, Viola," said Julia. "Wait until it gets too dark to play."

Until the darkness fell they played on with steady vigour. It became apparent that Orlando was an adversary worthy of Viola's utmost skill. The balance of dexterity and practice was on her side, but her eagerness made her sometimes overhasty, and Orlando's aim had that superior steadiness in which, thus far, the male half of humanity must be acknowledged superior. And he played honestly, desiring to win if he could, and fully conscious that thus he pleased her better than by any shuffling attempt to yield her a false triumph. In the twilight they went indoors. The remnant of flannel was produced, and the strips torn off were sewn into one of sufficient length. Then Orlando, sitting down, submitted to Viola's

bandaging, and found himself recalling, as appropriate, the idea of Elaine. The cap, when put on, was pronounced quite becoming; and Orlando, having received this assurance, declared that he must keep it on, in order to mould it to the shape of his head.

Presently some one mentioned the nightingale, and Orlando was asked whether there were nightingales at Sherborne.

"Certainly there are. I have heard them often in the woods just below here."

"Do you know," said Julia, "I have never heard a nightingale—or, at least, I have never known that I have."

"Let us go out and see whether they are to be heard now," said her husband. "It is a glorious night."

The sisters went to fetch hats and shawls, and they passed out into the still, sweet-scented evening, Orlando still wearing the pale-blue flannel cap, which, taken

in conjunction with his dark hair and eyes, gave him rather the air of a melodramatic pirate. The moon was by this time up but was obscured by floating clouds. Their steps sounded dully on the path, neither damp nor dry. They walked in silence, watching the dark shades of the twigs against the dim sky. Suddenly came the mellow, tremulous, unmistakable note floating out above them, and setting astir all that perfume of poetry which has spiritualized the nightingale to all nations who hear her voice. The moon slid out for a moment from behind a thin covering of cloud. Orlando saw that, as they stood listening, Julia's hand was in her husband's. Viola was a little behind. The white half-light, falling upon her upturned face, gave it a softened beauty greater than belonged to it by day. The moon slid into darkness and into light again. The nightingale sang on and on, then suddenly

stopped short, and left emptiness in the air. They walked on slowly, hoping to hear it again; but it kept silence, and presently the lowered human voices rose.

"'And will it not come again?—and will it not come again?'" said Julia, with a long-drawn breath.

Then Duncannon, who was in love with the shifting moonlight, entreated them to go on farther—to the end, at least, of the trees; and Orlando added that the nightingale was often to be heard in the wooded hollows round his own house, if they cared to come so far. They walked far enough to see the moon shining down the ripples of the Sherril, then Julia, pausing, declared it needful that they should go home, or Sarah would be alarmed.

Orlando bade them good night, and went home in the opposite direction, not sorry to recollect that his hat had been left behind, and would require to be fetched from the cottage in the morning.

That blue bandage-cap he took off, when he reached home, with excessive care, set it down before him, and looked at it from different points of view with a smile of great satisfaction.

CHAPTER VII.

VIOLA'S BIRTHDAY.

"I have found out a gift for my fair."

It had been mentioned to Orlando that Mr. and Mrs. Haverdike were expected home the next day. He was not, therefore, surprised to come upon Mr. Haverdike, a day or two after, as he himself was riding home. They joined company, and the happy art-patron very soon began to talk of his new dining-room, and to express his gratitude to Orlando for having introduced him to Duncannon.

"And besides being, as he unmistakably is, a consummate artist, he is so extremely pleasant a neighbour. His wife and sister

are exceptionally charming women. Mary is delighted with them. They are quite an addition to the neighbourhood. Don't you think so?"

"I do, indeed," Orlando answered, emphatically.

"Mary has a little plan," pursued the other. "I don't know whether you happen to know that Miss Cash's birthday is on the 15th. Mary has made up her mind to have a water-excursion in honour of it—a sort of river-picnic; quite a small and friendly affair, you know. I hope you will join us."

Of course Orlando declared that he would be delighted. His mind was, however, a little distracted by an idea which had occurred to him at the mention of Viola's birthday, and he hardly heard the next few words. When his attention again became awake, he found Mr. Haverdike saying, "It is not very often that

Mary takes a liking of that sort. Miss Cash has quite fascinated her."

"I fancy most women find Miss Cash attractive," said Orlando. "My sister was very much taken with her."

"I should imagine she would attract all cultivated minds," Mr. Haverdike observed. "There is something very Greek about her—a little the Nausicäa type."

Orlando had the words almost on his lips, "Let us hope that her story may be a happier one than Nausicäa's," but for some unexplained cause he intercepted their utterance, and Mr. Haverdike's road here diverging, they parted with few more words.

It wanted about a week to that 15th of the month, and Orlando employed much of the interval in far-stretching walks through the most thickly wooded neighbouring parts. These walks were by no means confined to the footpaths. On the

contrary, he sought out the darkest and most secluded nooks. He never gathered anything, but seemed to note the different spots in his memory. On one of these excursions he had threaded to its utmost limit a little copse that here bordered the road. The regular fall of hoofs came to his ear. He lifted himself from his groping among violet-leaves, and glancing over the green and grey stained paling, caught through a thick screen of boughs a glimpse of two ladies riding forward, and bending their faces a little towards each other as they came. The nearer was Mrs. Haverdike, and surely the other was Viola. He drew back, and stood quite still among the leaves. They came nearer. He could distinguish them now quite plainly; could see that Viola wore no orthodox habit, but merely a long riding-skirt, with the bodice of some dark-coloured dress. As they came closer he could hear their voices,

then their words. Mrs. Haverdike seemed to be speaking with emphatic earnestness, but the first words which reached him were Viola's.

"No, I am sure I should not have been satisfied; I should have wanted to go out and fight too. Britomart was always my favourite heroine."

"Oh, but, my dear, the whole spirit of chivalry depended upon the serene, star-like supremacy of woman. It was the very difference, the calmness, the distance, the *ewig-weibliche*, that inspired their lovers to such heroic deeds. And the men felt it. You remember Mrs. Browning's 'Romaunt of the Page,' the knight who

> 'Evermore
> Would love her as my servitor,
> But little as my wife.'"

"I always thought that knight was not a very noble person," said Viola. "I should not at all have liked to be his wife,

either staying at home or fighting. It seems to me that, as far as that was the idea of chivalry, it was false, and could only be kept up by artificial ways of life. When the knight came to be married to his lady-love, he must sooner or later have discovered that she was a human being, with troubles, temptations, and aspirations very much like his own. And if he had always looked upon her as a kind of angel, the disenchantment must have led to very much unhappiness—yes, and injustice too, for nothing is more unjust than unreasonable expectations of perfection from other people. I do believe that it is from the days of chivalry that the idea has come down to novelists, of married life being a prosaic existence, not suitable to write about."

"Oh, but I am sure you would not wish any lover of yours——" Mrs. Haverdike began, but the rest of her speech was lost

in the passing tread of her groom's horse, and Orlando heard no more. Smiling to himself, he turned back into the shadowy wood.

On the next day, which was the 14th, he started out at an early hour, and made the round of many places which he had visited in the preceding days. From this excursion he returned no longer, as before, empty handed, but laden with more violets than a casual observer would have thought possible at this season. And in the evening there came from London a carefully packed box, containing pansies of every shade and mingling of hues. These, together with his own collected violets, he set to work to arrange in a basket. The pansies, carefully ordered with due regard to their varying tints, occupied the centre; around them was the sweet-scented border of violets, and a little edge of fine fern-leaves fringed the whole. The grave

solicitude with which he laid these flowers upon a builder-like foundation of damp wool, with an upper surface of wet sand, the consideration which went to the placing of each stalk, might have belonged to some task of national importance. Surely, this anxious interest in so trivial an employment was a little strange in a proverbially practical young man, who believed that he had outgrown the illusions and the dreams of youth. Orlando, however, was too much engrossed in his occupation to have any attention at liberty for self-inquiry. At last, the flowers were arranged to his satisfaction ; he took them out into a dark, cool place, and went to seek a youth, sober beyond his years, who assisted in the garden, and to whom he proposed to entrust their delivery. But on second thoughts he changed his mind, and turned back into the library without giving any direction concerning them.

He was out, the next morning, while the dew was yet upon the fields, and the sun low enough to spread a sloping golden light across the placid river. The silence of early morning still prevailed. He and Rob were the only moving shapes among the trees. A pale, thin line of smoke was rising from one chimney of the village; here and there the first birds were waking; the leaves looked fresher and brighter-coloured than at noon. Orlando himself walked on with a serene, satisfied face, feeling a joy in the stillness of the cool air, a sense of rest and fulfilment in the green lights and faint, long shadows. He came out, at last, by the low garden wall of the cottage, there hushed Rob, and bade him wait, swung himself over—for the gate was locked—and creeping softly along the grass, vexed at the length of his shadow, set the basket on the door-step and fled. Being once more safe in the road at a few

yards' distance, he looked back upon the house. The blinds were still closed in all the windows, and the few daisies on the lawn had not yet opened their eyes. Orlando looked for a moment with a smile that might have been a benediction, then turning, sauntered home through the wakening woods, well pleased with his morning's work.

Viola, waking presently to the serene consciousness of a very sunny birthday, rose and began to dress, singing gently to herself. To her came Julia, just dressed and eager.

"Oh, Viola, look here!" she cried, holding out the sweet-scented basket of flowers. "Sarah found it on the door-step when she went down. There cannot be much doubt for whom it is meant."

Viola, looking, smiled radiantly, and taking the basket, blushed slowly and deeply from chin to forehead.

"It must have been Mr. Sherborne," proceeded Julia.

"Yes," said Viola; and after a moment, "I trust this assortment of *viola tricolor* is not meant to denote that I have what Andrew Marvell calls a 'parti-coloured mind.'"

"I wonder whether these violets grew about here?" said Julia, eschewing further reference to the symbolism of pansies. Then, hearing her husband whistling as he walked about in the little dining-room, she hastened down to give him his breakfast; and Viola remained gazing into the flower-cups and hearing, as a background to her thoughts, those words of Ophelia, which each sister had had in her mind and neither had been willing to quote.

Orlando, having begun his day so unusually early, had time to arrange sundry small business matters before going to join Mrs. Haverdike's water-party. He had

observed during his rambles several portions of fence-work which needed to be renewed, and had perceived that a little gutter, running across one of the Sherborne Lodge copses, wanted clearing out. All these little matters being despatched, he set out once more upon that now familiar path towards the cottage, Rob accompanying in a less regular progression. He reflected, with some annoyance as he walked, that one day this week he must go to London, and thence to those Capton lands which lay in Hampshire, at an awkward distance from Sherborne. Probably he would be obliged to be away two or three days. The idea was very displeasing. Seriously, it might be as well to sell those lands. If, for instance, he were to marry, and were to be successful in getting into parliament—a scheme which had taken much more settled form since he knew that Viola had made allusion to it—it would be extremely trying

to have to go down to Capton every three months or so. At that point he stopped short his runaway thoughts and laughed at himself. But thus the recognition came to him of a new hope in his life.

As he came in sight of the strip of road dividing Mr. Haverdike's house from the cottage, he saw Viola, Julia, and Duncannon advancing from its one end, while Mrs. Haverdike advanced from the other, accompanied by a tall young brother whom he had met before, and who was in the chrysalis state between Eton and Cambridge. Hastening his steps, he came up with them at the moment of meeting. There was a brief Babel of greetings and birthday wishes. He saw with satisfaction that Viola was wearing a tiny bunch of pansies and violets in the front of her light dress. Mrs. Haverdike explained that her husband had gone down to the river-bank to make sure that the boats were ready. Thither

they now followed, and Orlando, in a very few minutes, was walking at Viola's side, while Rob followed close at their heels. She turned to him at once with thanks for the flowers, and expressed wonder at seeing so many violets so late in the year.

"Oh, but there are a great many in the woods still, in shady corners. I could show you where to find as many again in a few days. Will you come violet-hunting, one day?"

"I should like it, but I am going to London to-morrow."

"Are you, indeed?" Then, with an instantaneous resolve to hasten his own journey, "So am I. Might we not travel together?"

"Are you really going?" asked Viola, rather seriously.

"Yes, indeed; I must go. I have to be down in Hampshire," Orlando protested.

They came to the banks of the Sherril,

and found Mr. Haverdike and a young lady awaiting them there. The young lady was introduced as Miss Carroll, and was, it appeared, a cousin of Mrs. Haverdike. She was a tall, rosy, round-eyed girl, ready to laugh at the feeblest joke, and evidently regarded her cousin from Eton in the light of a professional jester.

Two boats were ready, and the party dividing in two, took possession, while Rob pursued a more or less parallel course upon the bank. Orlando found himself the companion of Mrs. Haverdike, Duncannon, and Viola. The boat floated lightly. The fluctuating cloud-shadows came and went with the breath of a lazily stirring wind. From their fellow-voyagers in the other boat came continual little outbursts of laughter and exclamation. For these four the joy of the motion alone was almost enough. Orlando, drawing his long, slow strokes with Viola opposite to him, and the

full-blown beauty of the summer breathing everywhere about him, was completely happy, and the happier that the river was his own familiar Sherril. The Sherril, like every other river worthy of the name, had a character of its own. It was a placid, almost a languid stream, and made no haste upon its journey. It had no utilitarian desires to take the shortest line, but turned aside from its course into bend after bend, going astray towards whatever flowery nook it passed. Its banks, here at Sherborne, were flat; on one side ran a towing path, bordered high with tall wild-flowers and seeding grasses. All about were little nests of copse and thicket, running down sometimes to the water's edge, where the dwarf-willows, and the sallows, and the white-leaved elders dipped their feet, sometimes retreating and leaving wide patches of reeds and bulrushes that moved slowly in the wind, and were starred with blue

forget-me-nots, between. The lap of the oars, the soft ripple of the water, murmuring as it touched the boat, brought a sense of serene and dreamy repose. From the bank came, where the trees were thick, the twitter of a hundred birds; and from the reeds the low cry of the water-fowl, as they darted in and out, flecks of brown, breasted with glimmering white. Viola was steering, an occupation of some care and difficulty in this many-winding river, and Orlando, facing her, found occasion, more than once, to advise and warn. His better knowledge of the waters made him in some sort the captain of the small embarkation, and but for his presence the boat would more than once have been run aground upon the reedy shallows. By-and-by they came to a less uneven course, and advanced in better style. Then it was that, when his attention might relax a little, the words came to Orlando's lips which had been

running for two days in his recollection, and Viola was surprised to hear murmured, in a low and pleasant monotone—

> "'I would forgive, and evermore
> Would love her as my servitor,
> But little as my wife.'"

"Whom, Sherborne?" asked Duncannon from behind him; while Viola looked up, amazed, and forgot her steering.

"Oh, only a quotation that was in my mind."

"Well, how strange!" cried Mrs. Haverdike, adding eagerly, "You agree with that knight, don't you, Mr. Sherborne?"

"Why, no, not quite," said Orlando.

And Viola said, "Mr. Sherborne has heard of our discussion. Was it Mr. Haverdike who told you?"

"No one told me of any discussion."

"But you knew?" And, as he laughed, "Where were you? You must have been in the trees?"

"Yes, where were you?" chimed in Mrs. Haverdike.

Orlando answered, between his strokes, "I was among the bushes in the copse—looking for violets, in fact—and so——"

"And so you'll be in the bushes again," cried Duncannon. "My dear Viola, do take care what you are doing."

Viola, much abashed, pulled vigorously at the yoke-line, and the boat swung out once more towards the centre of the channel, while Mrs. Haverdike's face settled down again from alarm to composure.

"I am afraid the discussion must be put off for the present," said Orlando.

After that there was no sustained conversation, but only interchange of remarks, and tranquil enjoyment of the pleasant, passing hour. Viola desired presently to take her turn at an oar; and a change of position was effected, Orlando going into Duncannon's place, and Viola taking his.

This arrangement enabled him to observe the earnestness with which she devoted herself to her task. Here, again, her experience was less than her zeal, and Orlando could continually advise and assist. The first result of this alteration was to bring the two boats again into company, Miss Carroll and Walter Ashington, who were rowing in the other, being fully a match for Orlando and Viola, although by no means for Orlando and Duncannon.

Presently a shout of 'Boat, ahoy!' came from a bend just before them, and Rob began to bark at the man and horse advancing slowly along the towing-path. A barge hove in sight, sweeping leisurely down the bend. Both boats struck outward towards the farther bank, and the second yielded place to the first that there might be room to pass. As soon as the barge was well behind, Orlando, stooping forward, whispered to Viola to change places and let him take her oar.

"We will race them here; there's a good free course for the next half-mile or so, and we can get a good start."

Viola agreed. The exchange was effected quietly enough, and the occupants of the second boat were amazed to see them shoot suddenly ahead. Laughter and denunciatory shouts came after them; they heard Walter Ashington exhorting his cousin, "Pull, Annie, pull!"

But Orlando, as Duncannon observed, was in the position of Macgregor with his foot upon his native heath. Spurred by the feeling of Viola's presence, he pulled with more eagerness than in any college strife. The distance between pursued and pursuers grew and grew, until Orlando, relaxing his efforts, panted forth breathlessly—

"I don't think they will catch us now. Here, Duncannon, come and take an oar. This heat is awful."

"I tell you what," said Duncannon, generously, "I'll tow you."

So Duncannon was put ashore, to the companionship of Rob. A pole and line were hoisted, and Orlando, yielding to strong persuasion, accepted the stern-seat, and there reclining, hot and exhausted, had a parasol offered him, and found repose delicious. The water here was deep almost to the very bank, and Duncannon, walking on the path, could talk and be talked to. For a little time there was a lively conversation, that by-and-by sank down into silence. Orlando leaned back, watching the greenness on each side, and observing the shadows slowly lengthen to the afternoon.

CHAPTER VIII.

"ALL IN THE GOLDEN AFTERNOON."

"C'était cette adorable chose
La fin d'un beau jour à la fin de l'été."
François Coppée.

"OH, by-the-by," said Duncannon, breaking suddenly a long pause of lazy silence, "you can tell me, now, what it was that you overheard, the other day when you were among the bushes? No good of yourself, I trust, eavesdropping in that way."

Orlando's answer floated back slowly. "I heard neither good nor ill, which is less flattering than either. Mrs. Haverdike and Miss Cash were discussing the position of woman in the days of chivalry, as represented by the poets."

"Were you regretting them?" asked Duncannon of the ladies. "Did you both sigh to 'rain influence and adjudge the prize'? There's no need; you do it just as much as ever."

"Viola would not agree with me in regretting them at all, Mr. Duncannon. She declared that she would not have stayed in her castle, but would have gone out to fight by her husband's side."

"Like Britomart," added Orlando.

"Only Britomart fought against him, if you remember," said Viola.

"If I had been the husband I should have liked that, too," decided Duncannon. "Of course, if one happened to have a disagreeable wife, one could insist upon her staying at home. That was one of the great advantages of the feudal system."

The others laughed; but Mrs. Haverdike, bending over the edge of the boat towards him, said, quite earnestly, "But,

Mr. Duncannon, look at the general idea —the central idea. Is there not something very typical, very universally true, about it? I do so like that setting up of love as the centre of a lifetime—something to be worked, and striven, and fought for, and crowning the long efforts at last."

The little woman's eyes enlarged, and her face quite glowed with enthusiasm as she spoke.

"And then?" said Orlando, gently. "Life did not finish there. What followed? Surely, disillusion. The man and the woman knew nothing of each other. During all those years of effort they had lived apart, in different circles, learning to think different thoughts, and look at the world from different points of view. What sympathy could there be between a husband whose whole sphere lay in the battle-field and the tilt-yard, and a wife

whose interests were bound up in tapestry and domestic medicine?"

Viola's listening face had drawn him on, from the quiet tone of his first words, to one of animation, and he raised himself upon his elbow, and then to full uprightness. As he ceased, and looked to her for approval, she answered with a little nod and smile of agreement.

"Yes," said Mrs. Haverdike, doubtfully; "but still, Mr. Sherborne, look at the long constancy that was produced. Surely, you will not deny that that must have been very elevating to the character?"

"Did not the secret of the constancy lie in the very little which the knight knew of the lady?" suggested Orlando, meekly.

"Oh, what a dreadful idea! Viola, help me to protest," cried Mrs. Haverdike.

But Viola only smiled a little, and listened for Orlando's explanation.

"Of course, there is such a thing as real constancy—the love that goes on growing with more and more knowledge. But faithfulness to a creature of one's own fancy is a very different thing, and a very sad thing; for it brings all the pains of hope deferred, and fulfilment, when it comes, is a blight. The constancy of chivalry seems to have been proof against every trial except marriage."

Duncannon laughed, and Mrs. Haverdike drew back, a little hurt.

Orlando went on earnestly, still turning to Mrs. Haverdike, but still speaking to Viola, as an actor who is also a lover may speak to his own far-off love through the words of Romeo.

"Consider the false ideal of marriage. Griselda seems to have been the pattern wife of mediæval admiration. Now, it seems to me that Griselda was essentially a bad wife. Her behaviour encouraged

all the lowest and meanest part of her husband's nature. The affection that can come back like that, uncomplaining, after wanton cruelty, is the affection of a dog or a slave, and the very food of tyranny. Compare such a love as that with Portia's appeal to Brutus."

"Oh, but Griselda was an isolated instance; and her lower rank must be taken into account," said Mrs. Haverdike.

"Let us take Geraint and Enid, then. When Enid was a girl in her father's house he was averse to let her lead his horse into the stable, but when she was his wife, his courteousness was all gone. He would let her drive a string of horses through the tangles of the wood without help, while he rode behind at ease."

"There are plenty of men like him still," said Viola.

"Oh, but that was in his trouble of mind," said Duncannon.

"He ought not to have been in any trouble of mind," said Viola.

"Exactly," said Orlando, turning quickly towards her. "He did not understand his wife; and instead of speaking openly to her, frankly and sincerely, as he would have done to any man who was his friend, he only sulked. If there had been the love that involves friendship between them, there could never have been a doubt; it must have died in the first interchange of words."

"I see I am quite in the minority," said Mrs. Haverdike. "I don't own myself converted yet, but I am glad to see that so high an idea can come of the modern spirit."

There was a short silence. As Mrs. Haverdike ceased, Orlando's eyes, released from polite attention, went instinctively to Viola. Her clear gaze, frank and full, was resting on him, and a bright smile of re-

sponse made answer to his glance, assuring him that he had spoken her faith as well as his own. Our own utterance may sometimes bring us the first knowledge of our belief. Orlando had learned, during his part in this debate, what it was that lay at the root of his. He sat still, following out in his thought the deeper currents of which he thus newly grew aware.

Upon this rather emotional silence broke Duncannon's words, uttered slowly.

"The feudal times had one great advantage. I am very grateful to them for one thing."

His listeners looked up, impatient and inquiring.

"The dress was so artistic, and their ways and manners provided so many subjects for pictures."

Viola and Orlando laughed. Mrs. Haverdike was a little pained by this ebullition of masculine flippancy.

Not long after this, they reached their destined place of landing, Riversham, a village on the water's edge. Their companions were not far behind them, and arrived, complaining loudly of their treacherous conduct in taking flight when they chanced to be in front.

"It was un-Grandisonian on Sherborne's part, was it not?" said Duncannon, disclaiming, by implication, any share in the deed, and Miss Carroll, with many smiles, assured Orlando that she thought it was horridly mean.

The boats were left in charge of a man belonging to the village, and the party wended its way slowly up a long slope of wood-clothed hill, towards an inn and a bit of ruined abbey at the top. For a time there was but one group, and the talk was general, but presently the group became divided and scattered. Orlando and Viola lingered, and Rob kept with them.

"You agreed with me, did you not, about the age of chivalry?" said Orlando, presently.

"Oh yes, most fully; indeed, I said much the same to Mrs. Haverdike the other day. And I always did dislike Griselda. It is a story against Cecily, that when she was quite a little girl, and read the tale for the first time, she asked, 'Mamma, was Griselda an idiot, then?'"

"Yet I am sure you must know people still who uphold her as a model."

"Oh yes; the man who liked women to be women admired her very much. And I suppose he admired her husband too, since, certainly, he was a typical man."

"With what scorn you say it!"

"Do I? I am sorry if I did. One does wrong to make any barrier between one and the other. One ought to be able to make allowance, and be like mamma, with 'the wise indifference of the wise.'

But when I think of some things—of the habitual injustice with which even just men think of women, of the inequalities of the law, of the claim for subjection to be yielded from one reason-gifted being to another—then I can hardly help being bitter and feeling glad that I am one of the wronged, not the wrongers."

She spoke vehemently, more vehemently than Orlando had ever known her speak, and he received her earnestness as a sign of trust. It occurred to his mind that if her lot had been cast in those feudal times, she would not only have fought by her husband's side, but would have fought remarkably well.

"If all women were like you, there would be less injustice done," said he.

"Honestly, I believe there would," she answered, taking his words to refer merely to her opinions, not to her nature. "The doubt implanted into so many women,

whether they are not answerable for their lives to man, as well as to God, lies at the root of half the mischief." Then, with a little smile, she added, "It comes to about this, doesn't it? we want more such mothers in the world as mine."

"'Whom to know was a liberal education,'" quoted Orlando, in full agreement.

Viola's face looked as if her thoughts had gone away to the consideration of some problem—perhaps the future of some girl whose mother was unlike her own. Presently, recalling them with a little sigh, she seemed to give up the solution, and to bring her attention again to the present. They had come to two diverging paths, and paused.

"I wonder which way they went?" said she.

"Either will do, but this is prettier; let us go this way," said Orlando, rather deceitfully, since he knew this branch to be

longer as well as prettier. They followed that path accordingly, mounting slowly a long, gradual slope, the path narrowing as they went. For a minute or two they had not spoken.

Viola, looking round with infinite contentment upon the sunny greenness, said, presently, "It is one comfort of getting older that one's enjoyment of the country increases so much."

"Is the care of getting old beginning to weigh upon you already?" said Orlando. And he seemed to find the idea diverting.

"Is it not time?" said she, quite prepared for a mock defence of her chance words.

Thus they walked on, not saying very much, happy in each other's society, breathing the delicious, wood-scented air, untroubled by the slightest sense of uneasiness or constraint. From the fluctuating doubts, the trembling hopes, each involving

a corresponding fear, which make so large a portion of most lovers' thoughts, they were altogether free. But to each the presence of the other made the crowning sweetness of the world; a word, a glance would have sufficed to bring the avowal on both sides of complete trust and affection. But neither felt any desire to require such an avowal, here and now. The present was enough. They came in due time to the resting-place where their companions were waiting for them.

"We thought you had got lost," said some one.

And, "What made you come that way?" asked some one else.

"Oh, we did not know that you had not come that way too; it is much prettier," said Orlando, with a pleasant smile, and his superior knowledge of the country was, of course, unassailable.

The rest of the day passed agreeably

enough, but there was no recurrence for Orlando and Viola of such tranquil happiness as that walk through the shady greenness of the woods had brought them. On the return journey they were divided, but they were in too contented and cheerful a mood to be much troubled by this separation. Besides, were they not to have a three-quarters of an hour's journey together to-morrow morning? Each could hear the voice of the other floating across, mingling among the talk from the other boat. Now and then came a laugh, waking on the lips of the hearer a little responsive smile. As the boats neared their destination, the flickering talk died into silence. The tranquillity of beginning evening spread itself over the river and over the drowsy lands. The soft twilight thickened, and the little breezes dropped. They came to land, and Orlando parted from the rest, taking leave of Viola with a last word

about to-morrow. He did not at once go in when he reached home, but sauntered up and down the terrace with Rob beside him. Presently, he seated himself carelessly upon the balustrade, looking over on the grass, the deep-green trees, and well-worn footway. The familiar scene had been a background to all the phases of his growth. His life passed before him. The old dreams of that autumn day, so long ago, rose up and gathered form again like the genii of Eastern legend. Here, it seemed to him, his life had joined on once more to the past. His whole relation to Elizabeth, that long interlude of love and pain, had been a deviation, not the fulfilment, as a life with Viola would be, of all the hopes and intentions of his better nature. He had loved Elizabeth with the first heat of boyish passion that could never come again, and its very memory set her apart from all other women; but

she never had been, never could have been, to him what Viola was. Nor had the former love come near, in fulness and depth, to this. His thoughts left his own feelings and went to settle upon her. He recalled her words, her tones, her bright, clear gaze. To all these memories it was the inner meaning which gave peculiar charm; the sympathy, the comprehension, the frank, resolute, thoroughly healthy mind and soul. Ah, if he might but have her by him always! On her love, as yet, he did not dare to reckon; but the hope could not be suppressed that the inner union which made itself felt to him in almost every thought could hardly fail of influencing her too. He did not feel any very eager desire to hasten a decision. He would wait until he returned from Capton. Then he would go to her at her mother's. A thought of Millie crossed his memory. He looked up to the even-

ing sky and laughed. Perhaps Millie would be satisfied at last.

Rob, at his master's laugh, nestled his head closer to Orlando's knee. "You would be satisfied too, would not you, old boy?" said Orlando. And obeying an evident suggestion on Rob's part that they should go in and supper be provided, he rose, and going in, glanced round upon the empty room with a smile that seemed to say, "Wait till I bring you home, Viola —my heart's-ease!"

CHAPTER IX.

A MEETING.

"If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee?"

Orlando and Viola travelled up together the next morning, and their journey was lightened by conversation of a pleasant and cheerful kind. As, however, it was in great part political, and as political discussions are apt to lose their interest when the points which they concern have become matters of history, its record may advantageously be omitted. Then Orlando took himself to Portland Place, lunched with his sister, and went away to see his uncle, who was going very shortly to Paris,

and whose advice it was desirable to have, concerning Capton. From the Temple he sauntered slowly back, enjoying, in a calmly benevolent spirit, the bustle and stir of the long streets. When he had arrived for the second time in Portland Place it wanted about half an hour to dinner-time, and he rather reckoned upon finding Millie free for a little peaceful gossip. Going down, he found the room empty, and waited, glancing through a newspaper, until a few minutes before the hour. Then Millie came in rather hurriedly, and with a countenance of concern.

"Oh, Orlando," said she, "who do you think is here? Elizabeth—Elizabeth Glendinning."

"Elizabeth Glendinning," repeated Orlando, vaguely, feeling as if the world had suddenly swung backwards in its course.

"She has been in England ever since Monday; but she says she felt a need to

go and rest in the country for a few days before she came to any one who knew her. Mrs. Bannacker tells me she has been down to Willingshurst, wandering about alone. I am sure, myself, that she went down there because of that wretched Captain Grove. There, I won't talk like that of him—he's dead. But I know it was in the plantation there that he proposed to her."

Orlando had turned very pale. His wound was old and was healed, but the scar was painful still.

"She looks so changed, so ill. Oh, Orlando, it makes me ready to cry to see her; so— I don't know; as if all her life had been worn out of her."

"Poor thing!" said Orlando, sighing deeply.

"I think she won't come down this evening. She seems very tired; but she likes to have Charlie about her. He really

is a dear, quiet boy. Do you know, he has a great many ways that remind me of poor papa."

Orlando could not think of Charlie, or even of his father, just then. He could only think of Elizabeth Glendinning, worn out by the battle of her life, and lying, desolate, upstairs. Her image haunted him through nearly all the night. It was long before he slept, and when he did, she figured in his dreams.

The next morning they met at breakfast. His attentive ear had caught her step, soft but unelastic, on the stairs, and he was prepared to see her. The door opened quietly, and the ghost of Elizabeth Glendinning came in. She was thin, colourless, hollow-eyed ; her hands almost transparent, the fine lines of her face worn into a settled shape of haggard care, and on her cheeks a pallor as of white wax, deepening into blue shadows round the eyes. Yet

the ghost was still beautiful, as the woman had been beautiful. The outline of the features, the colour and setting of the eyes, the poise of the chin and throat, were things defying change. Hers had never been the merely skin-deep beauty 'que donnent deux beaux yeux, des couleurs, et vingt ans.' Its foundation lay deeper, upon unalterable lines.

Orlando, as he saw her advance, felt his heart shaken by something of the old influence, and by a recurrence of yesterday's feeling, that the world had turned backward into the past. It was a strange and disturbing feeling, one which made his eyes fall, and the colours of sun and open air forsake his cheeks. He could not look up, as he did to Viola, for the meeting glance of her eyes, nor did her presence, like Viola's, bring clearness to his world, but confusion.

Millie greeted Elizabeth with sisterly

warmth, and Gilbert with the old tone of habitual affection that took back Orlando's memory to the days when he had been half jealous of Gilbert. Then it was Orlando's turn to touch her hand, and say a word or two of pleasure in meeting her again. She smiled gently in answer to them all, and when Orlando spoke, just lifted her eyes and looked down again. Yes, it was as Millie had said—her life was worn out of her; this was a mere semblance, a Florimel wrought of snow, with breath and motion, and a kind of life sufficient for the needs of every day, but not Elizabeth. She spoke a little, of things unimportant. Her voice was changed too—worn thinner, but not sharpened; the sweet, gracious manner was the same, the peculiar atmosphere of charm surrounded her still. Orlando, for his part, could hardly speak at all. The sound of her voice and the knowledge of her presence were too disturbing.

His tranquil daily life was shaken by rising waves of deep pity; her face went with him through all the petty business of the day. He thought of her more often than of Viola, and the point of time to which his mind again and again went forward was the moment in which he should come again into her presence. This next meeting took place on the evening of the following day. He found her sitting, leaning back in a low, easy chair, while little Charlie stood by her, with his fair head against her shoulder, and his dark eyes fixed admiringly on her face. When Orlando came and sat down near them, Charlie's mind seemed troubled by a doubt whether to remain with Elizabeth or to attach himself to his uncle, of whom he was very fond. He carried his earnest gaze from Elizabeth's face to Orlando's, and after a moment stretched out to him a small hand, saying, with gracious condescension, "I like you, uncle."

"I am not jealous, old man; thank you all the same," Orlando answered, smiling slightly as he took the tiny hand.

"Charlie is very much like you," said Elizabeth. "He has quite a Sherborne face; and little Millie, on the other hand, is quite ridiculously like Gilbert."

"Yes, isn't she? Millie encourages herself to hope that she may grow up like her aunts."

"To think that Ida and Maudie should be aunts! I am sorry to have just missed seeing Ida." For Ida had sailed with her husband for India, about a month before.

There was a little pause, in which the thoughts of both went back to that summer noonday, with Ida and Maudie, among the willows. Then Elizabeth, stroking the soft hand of the child as it lay in one of hers, spoke again.

"I feel almost like Rip van Winkle; the children whom I knew are married,

and a new generation has arisen of whom I know nothing. How is your cousin Rosa?"

"She was very well when we heard last. O'Brien and she are yachting somewhere in the neighbourhood of Scotland."

At this point Millie came in.

"Oh, Orlando, have you had any dinner? We dined earlier than usual, because Gilbert had to go to some meeting."

Orlando assured her that he had dined, and in answer to further questions said that he must go to Capton again in a day or two, and that he wished the Capton lands were sold and done with.

"Well, there's one thing," said Millie, "you will stay with us for the day or two, won't you? And, Orlando, I wanted to ask you whether there were any lodgings free, just now, at Sherborne-by-the-Sea? The children are beginning to look so pale, and London is getting so hot and so empty,

and Elizabeth wants a little rest and quiet; so that, if we could go down there for a fortnight or three weeks, it would suit us all. Gilbert could have a boat, and the children could play on the beach, and Lizzie and I would be company for each other."

Orlando could not help feeling, like a stab, while she spoke, the sharp irony of the chance which was to take Elizabeth to Sherborne-by-the-Sea. Happily the length of Millie's speech gave him time to recover his usual tone and manner.

"I don't know about lodgings, Millie; but I can run down on Monday, if you like. I should not be sorry to have a look at the breakwater Damant is building."

"Oh, would you? I should be glad. I am sure you will like Sherborne-by-the Sea, Lizzie. It really is, now, the pleasantest seaside place that I know. Such a lovely air, and healthy, too."

"That is your doing, is it not?" said Elizabeth, looking up at Orlando with a brighter interest in her eyes than he had seen yet.

"Oh, I only gave the first push. It is doing itself now."

"Everybody thought at first that it was such a bad speculation," Millie explained to Elizabeth. "I know even Gilbert thought that Orlando had been rather rash. But it seems, after all, that he knew best, and now everybody makes such a fuss about him; I really feel quite proud of him."

"I don't think you used to be so energetic," said Elizabeth.

"No," said Orlando. "But a man must put his interest into something, and work keeps its interest better than amusement."

Their looks had crossed during those two phrases. She could not restrain herself from allusion to the past. Her desire

was so imperative to know whether the love that she had put away from her was waiting for her still. It was the last remnant of hope left to her. Surely his words were a confession that his hope of personal happiness had died when he lost her. Surely the troubled, grave glance which had but just touched hers and then fallen again carried a thought similar to her own. But she was too weak and in too much dread of finding herself mistaken to push inquiry further. She leaned back, looking once more white as a ghost, and took but little part in their further talk.

This was now Saturday evening. Orlando had thought within himself, when he planned his week beforehand, that he might spend his Sunday afternoon in Gower Street. Silvia and Cecily were energetic Sunday-school teachers; but it was likely that he would find either Mrs.

Cash or Viola, and he had almost resolved, whichever of these two he saw, to speak. But now that Elizabeth was here, he felt this impossible. Although he was not bound by the slightest tie of duty or love towards her, yet delicacy to the past forbade that, upon the morrow, as it were, of her return, he should engage himself to another woman. Even if he had never loved her, it would have been cruel to parade before her the gossip and discussion of a new engagement, with all its painful reminders of her own unhappy life. No, that could not be; he must wait a little longer—at least, until she was gone to Sherborne-by-the-Sea.

It must be a familiar observation to all who have parted and met again that it is possible to grow into much greater nearness, as well as into wider division, during an interval of separation. You parted from an acquaintance whom you

were disposed to like; a time elapses, during which there is no communication between you; you meet, and find yourselves friends. This had happened to Elizabeth and Orlando. When the first strangeness of meeting was over, they seemed to fall naturally into the position of old friends. She spoke to him in a tone of entreating trust. Her eyes seemed always to say, "Forgive me. Don't fall away from me." Yet, to Orlando, their intercourse was always painful. The remembrance of what she had been, put the present continually to comparison, and oppressed him with an aching pity. Nothing seemed to him too much to do for her. It was with remorse that he recognized the change in his own feeling. Never in the days of his first love, had his speech had so much gentle deference, his actions so reverent a care. But in all this was no sense of spiritual kindred.

Viola's word of 'fellow-soldiers,' which was so often in his mind, had here no application. Elizabeth and he were not fellow-soldiers. Her step fell never evenly with his; he had to make allowance for her—to choose his words and thoughts, lest he should hurt her or amaze her. If she had come home, happy, or prosperously married, however beautiful and fascinating, her presence would scarcely have touched him; the old emotion would have flickered up once, and then died down for ever, and the glamour of romance would have been wiped from the remembrances of youth. But now all this was otherwise. Her worn and altered face appealed to the deepest-lying fibres of his soul. The tenderness of his solicitude for her was unbounded, but it was a tenderness which brought to himself none of the keen joy belonging to love-service, and her presence was a constant renewal of old pain. He said to himself

that he was thankful that she turned to him, and that his carefully chosen talk could bring the infrequent smiles sometimes to her lips, and a light, recalling her old self, to her eyes; and he sat with her often, keeping her from the melancholy self-communings of thought. They were drifting, he fancied, by degrees into a quiet, rather saddened, friendship. How strange an end for all that passionate hope of seven years ago!

CHAPTER X.

IN THE PARK CRESCENT GARDENS.

"One string, my friend, is dumb beneath your hand

. . . . . .

Touch it no more, for you shall not regain
The sweet, lost tone. Take what is left, or let
Life's music sleep to Death. Let us forget
The perfect melody we seek in vain.

. . . . . .

Some old, forgotten tones may rise and wake
Our dying youth, and set our hearts aflame
With their old sweetness—to our lips the name
Of Love steal softly, for the old love's sake."

From the Cornhill Magazine of Feb. 1879.

SUNDAY and Monday were over, and it had been arranged that on the Thursday of the subsequent week, Elizabeth, Millie, and Gilbert, with the attendant train of children and nurses, were to go to Sherborne-by-the-Sea. On the morning of

Tuesday, Millie took occasion to say to her brother, "Oh, by-the-by, Orlando, do you know whether the Cashes are at home?"

"I believe so. Miss Cash came up the other morning when I did."

"I must go and call upon them before we go out of town," said Millie. She let a minute or two pass, and then said, as though taking up a theme quite unconnected, "You will stay till we go away, won't you, Orlando?"

"Certainly, Millie, if you wish. I did think of going home to-morrow, as I can't see to those Capton affairs till next week; but I can just as well stay."

"I think you do Elizabeth good; she exerts herself a little more, you see, for somebody a little out of her own circle, as it were; and you are not enough of a stranger to call forth that shrinking which she seems to feel for almost everybody.

You have a sort of soothing way, Orlando, that seems to put her more at her ease than I can manage to do."

So Orlando stayed, and devoted himself to the solace of Elizabeth. In the beginning of the next week he despatched his business at Capton, and returned thence to London instead of to Sherborne. He had not during this time seen any of the Cashes. He was aware of an uncomfortable feeling that Viola belonged to a totally different life, and that there would be an incongruity in meeting her now. He had slipped strangely into a new order of existence, possessing only its own present, and extending to no natural past or future. By-and-by he would pass out of this dim present and take up his own life again. The days drew slowly by. There was but one more left now; this was late on the afternoon of Wednesday, and to-morrow afternoon was fixed for the migration to the sea.

Orlando had spent the greater part of his day at the British Museum, searching for some plan or description of Sherborne church, as originally built. For the wave of church restoration, sweeping over the whole country, had now touched and wakened the drowsy world of Sherborne. The vicar and Mr. Haverdike entertained hopes of architectural improvement—that is, of decided changes—while Orlando, in the spirit of a man whose ancestors had seen it building, and been buried in its shadow, advocated only restoration in the strictest sense. A new school, bright and red, would be a pleasure to his soul; but a new or renewed church would make Sherborne, Sherborne no longer. Happily, he never knew that Mr. Haverdike had suggested the removal of a Sherborne monument, because the effigy upon it, of a ruffed and hooped lady, was quite out of keeping with the church, as well as

barbarous in itself. The vicar, however, was quite certain that Orlando would very much resent any such affront to his Elizabethan great-aunt, and begged the rash innovator never to hint at such a plan again. Orlando, therefore, remained in happy ignorance, and gave himself up, unruffled, to the labours of research.

Returning from his gropings through old county histories, itineraries, and surveys, he found a letter awaiting him, requesting him to meet the vicar and a fellow-churchwarden on Friday morning.

He wrote his answer, and made inquiry for the other members of the household. Millie and Gilbert were out. Miss Glendinning, it was believed, was in the Park Crescent Gardens. He resolved to go and bear her company, but finding the day's *Punch* on the table, took it up and became absorbed in it for the next half-hour. Then recalling his intention, he

started up remorsefully, and strode off to the gardens. He had never been within their railings since the afternoon which he had spent there with Elizabeth and her aunt. A little girl opened the gate for him, and he walked slowly up the paths, looking for Elizabeth. He found her in the most northern part of the enclosure, sitting on one of the seats in a broad avenue. She had a book beside her, but was not reading. At the approach of his step she looked up, and the faintest trembling of colour disturbed her paleness.

"I found no one in the house," said Orlando. "Millie and Gilbert are both out."

"Yes. I was tired, and so I did not go with them."

"Have you finished your novel? Should you like me to fetch you the next volume?" asked Orlando, after a moment.

"No, thank you. I have not finished it.

The fact is, I don't care very much for novels now. They seem such pale copies of reality. Real life is so much stranger than people's writings about it."

"Yes, I suppose it is," said Orlando, remembering the strangeness of his own, and of her life.

She glanced quickly towards him, and let her eyelids fall again. The brief interval—hardly more than a breathing space of silence—had a kind of terror.

"Shall we walk about a little?" said Elizabeth, breaking the pause, hastily.

They rose, and passed slowly along the curved, open walks skirting the plots of grass. Here they fell for a little time into mere everyday talk. But presently the conversation, oscillating like the shaken needle of a compass, settled at the personal point once more.

"These gardens have hardly altered at all," said Elizabeth. "I could almost

imagine, for a moment, that I was a little girl here again, and that Aunt Ellen was sitting somewhere in the shade." Then, and in a deeper tone, she added, "I wonder how I should have lived, if I had known in those days what the next twenty years would bring?"

"Life comes in such different shapes from what we look for," said Orlando.

"Yes, doesn't it? I suppose one must learn one's mistakes from experience. Only, unfortunately, life goes by in the learning. It is not of much use to me now that I can see so plainly every mistake of my own past, and know every one of them to be my own choice, my own fault."

"Your mistake. Will you blame yourself for believing others to be as good and as true as yourself?"

She shook her head and persisted.

"Ah, but it was my fault. No, don't

say a word against *him*. He might have been happy too, if he had never seen me. I have been like some one out of an old Greek tale, with a curse upon me. 'Where'er I came, I brought calamity.'"

The tone in which she spoke these words went to Orlando's heart.

"No, no, indeed. Not to me. Knowing you made a man of me."

He said it, impelled by the aching desire to comfort her, but knowing that what was true in the letter was false in the spirit. For to him, also, she had brought calamity —calamity so heavy that the brightest years of his life had been blasted by it.

"It is good of you to say so," she answered.

They walked on again a little, and presently she spoke again.

"I am really ashamed of pouring forth useless complaints in this way. You are all so patient with me that I am encouraged to be selfish."

"I am sure you believe that anything which you care to speak of, is of interest to me too."

"Well, yes—I do. You are very kind, Mr. Sherborne; you can't tell how much comfort you have given me since I came home. I had begun to lose trust and faith in everybody. One does, when there is no one to whom one dares speak frankly."

"But you have come back among your own friends now, and you will never have to go through that loneliness again."

"Do you think so?"

The weary tone, the hopelessness, too deep to care much about asserting itself, were to Orlando sadder than any declaration of sorrow. He uttered no reply, but the feeling of being looked at made her lift her eyes. His gaze was full of a troubled tenderness, anxious, sympathetic, watching for any desire of hers which he might fulfil.

"So many people have to outlive their lives, you know," she said, with a faint sigh. "And I am better off than most. Millie and Gilbert are very good to me. They will never be tired of taking care of me. I shall get tired, but they will not. Don't look as if it were so melancholy. I am at peace here, and oh, so glad to be at rest! And I am free."

"And after a little while, and when you grow stronger, you will be happy too."

Elizabeth made no answer, but as she walked, a carnation whose stalk had marked her place slipped from her book and fell upon the dusty path. Orlando hastened to pick it up. It was drooping and half withered; the deeply cut petals hung ragged, and the dust clung in its folds. Orlando shook it, but it remained soiled.

"You can't shake the dust off," said Elizabeth. "It will never bloom again."

She held out her hand for the broken

flower, and bent her face over it. Her head was turned away, but Orlando could see her tears falling upon its leaves.

Just here the path was hidden by thick bushes on each side. Elizabeth lingered, anxious, perhaps, to let her tears dry before passing again into the open. Again Orlando could not speak, because all words were too clumsy to express the fine shades of feeling.

Suddenly, with a kind of low, wailing cry, the words broke from her, satisfying a need of utterance for herself rather than in address to him: "It might have been, once, but it is all gone. It has been all a failure. I might have been a happy and a good woman, once." She dropped her book and her flower upon the little seat close by, and clasped her hands over her face.

"But it is not too late," said Orlando. "Surely it is not too late."

At these words, Elizabeth stopped suddenly short and dropped her hands. Her eyes shone full upon him through her tears, seeking in his face how much he might mean by that. Orlando, when she turned thus to him, lost memory of all else in the world. His own hopes and plans were gone like vanishing dreams; the one thing clear, in a full light, was the face of the woman who had first moved his heart with love, the face which for years had been the centre of his dreams, turned upon him, with the question shining, not to be hidden or mistaken, from its eyes, "Do you love me still?"

The wonderful quickness given by strong emotion to the processes of thought showed him, in the same breath, his freedom to respond to the appeal. Viola knew nothing. There could be no sufferer but himself; and his mood was such that any suffering which might lighten Elizabeth's

seemed sweet. Dearer than any hope for himself was the hope of bringing solace to her.

"May not the devotion of my whole life bring back some happiness to yours?" he said, speaking low and quickly, and finding in the reality of chivalrous respect a style of words belonging to the age of its pretence.

But chivalry and respect, the companions of deep love, are not able to be its substitutes, nor is their language that of love. It was not thus that Orlando could have wooed Viola, choosing the words that would be gentlest. His speech would have been the outburst of his own personal, urgent desire, too eager to have time for pause and choice.

But to Elizabeth the words were a promise of life and hope. The eagerly expectant, earnest face bent towards her betrayed to her no want.

Still looking at him, unable to find a word, she held out her two hands to him with a kind of low cry.

Her answer came disjointedly.

"What—still?—still? Ah, then, it's true."

For a moment or two she wept, her face hidden against Orlando's arm, her hands held close in his. He drew her gently to the seat, set back among the bushes. Very soon she mastered her emotion, dried her eyes, and lifted her face.

"How weak I am!" she said tremulously, summoning a faintly responding smile.

"You have gone through so much," Orlando began, but she stopped him.

"Ah, never mind. Let the past be. I can forgive it now. After all, the future is long, isn't it? I am not nine and twenty yet."

"And it shall be as happy as it is long, if I can make it so," Orlando answered.

She closed her eyes a moment, still smiling, and then, reopening them, said softly, "Oh, how strange to dare look forward! And now I can forgive myself too, partly, for all the pain I brought to you. That has haunted me through all these days and nights. I used to watch for any mention of you in Millie's letters, to see whether you were a little happier."

"Did you?" said Orlando. "If I had only known!"

His heart smote him at every word. She had been thinking of him through all these years of pain, and he—— But it was in time, and she should never know. Now, when she was silent, he saw how pale she was, and into what worn lines her face sank back. Oh, she should never know the troubles of doubt and loneliness again.

She looked up and found his eyes upon her, eloquent with the inward vow. Her old smile came slowly about her mouth.

"I have been down to Willingshurst," said she.

"Yes, I know."

"And to Sellingham.'

"We will go there together."

Her smile grew.

He took her hand into his, and slipped off a loose-grown ring.

"You must lend me this for a day or two."

But she retained it.

"No, not just yet. I want to get used to the thought first, before any one knows. Not even Gilbert or Millie just yet. I am half shy of them all yet. Not in London. Give me a week, Orlando."

The tone was the old tone of habit used towards Captain Grove. It hurt Orlando like a stab.

"*Give* you a week! Elizabeth, my dear Elizabeth, don't speak to me like that. My only hope and pleasure is to do any-

thing you like. Not a week, dear, or any time to bind you down, but whenever you like, and how you like."

Her thoughts flew to that former day, when amidst his sorrow, as now amidst his success, his first thought had been for her.

"My lot has not been a hard one, after all," she said, seeing a new glory lighten over the old, sad past. "Not many women can have been loved as I have been. Orlando, you will have to bear with me. I have grown hard and desponding. I am not the Elizabeth you used to know. My dear, you must not be too hasty. You don't know me. It would be better to wait—it would, indeed. I am not lovable, Orlando, now. I am old before my time —years and years older than you. You would not love me now, except for that old remembrance."

"The old remembrance is a part of my life," said Orlando, slowly. "I can't tell

now what I might have been or felt without it; but this I know, if you can marry me and be happy in the marriage, you will give me what I wish for more than for any other thing in the world. I am not afraid, Elizabeth, of your becoming unlovable to me."

And as he spoke, every word was true. He did wish more, far more, for the power of sheltering and cherishing her than for any personal joy which could be granted to him.

"You'll not deny me, Elizabeth, a second time?"

"No, no. I can't. Heaven forgive me, if I am selfish!"

The Albany Street church clock, which had warned them, on that previous day, of parting, struck again now. They looked at each other, each with a smile, remembering.

"We have waited a long time for the

second chapter," said Orlando, "but it has come at last."

"I wish Aunt Ellen could have known," said Elizabeth. "This last year or more, I have been glad she was saved from knowing. She would have been glad of this. I could have told her at once."

Through Orlando's mind shot, before he could repress it, the incongruous, the almost irreverent thought, that to tell Lady Ellen would have required a tone of voice which would have spared the need of special communication to other members of the household.

"She always liked you," Elizabeth continued, her mind going back to those former days whose perspective this new relation changed so strangely.

"She made me once or twice very happy," answered he. "And poor Gilbert —how jealous I was, every now and again, of him!"

Elizabeth laughed—the first laugh which had crossed her lips for many weeks. Then came a return out of the old days of the well-remembered tone of gentle seniority.

"Don't you think, Mr. Sherborne, that we shall be late for dinner, if we don't go in?" Then, stopping short, and with a deep and sudden blush, "Ah, tell me—do I look as if I had been crying?"

"I don't know. You look as if something had happened to bring me back the Elizabeth whom I loved first."

"An Elizabeth who knows your worth a great deal better than that Elizabeth ever did. But come; indeed we must go in. What have you done with the key?"

Slowly, sedately, the two walked across the stretch of grass, and through the tunnel, into the second garden, whose gate was nearly opposite Millie's door. And Millie, from her window, saw them coming,

and thought how good it was of Orlando to stay talking to Elizabeth when he might have been in Gower Street with Viola.

CHAPTER XI.

PARTED.

"How could it be? We strove not to forget;
Rather in vain to that old time we clung,
Its hopes and wishes round our hearts we hung.
We played old parts, we used old names—in vain;
We go our way and twain once more are twain."

W. Morris.

ORLANDO was alone in Portland Place. Elizabeth was away at Sherborne-by-the-Sea, and he had no further need to watch over the motions of his face or the turns of his speech. He would have been loth to confess, even to himself, that his chief sensation was of relief. Yet so it was. His life of the last few years had been, if solitary, at least free. The text which had always gone home to his heart, and

hung with emphasis in his memory: 'We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak,' had never till now brought its burden into his own inmost life. He had taken up the burden, of his own will, and hardly knew till now, when it was lightened, how heavy it really was. Now he was alone. He resolved earnestly, almost fervently, to use these few days of peace and freedom in realizing to himself his full position in regard to Elizabeth. An unclear hope lay in his mind that he might be able to revive the old love, now that it had become a duty. And, indeed, did he not love her? No other woman was like her in his eyes; no other woman could make his heart ache by her sigh, or set his mind searching every recess of thought for a word to evoke her smile. He thought of Elizabeth, hour after hour, during that day, forcing his hopes to live in her future, and holding back by an effort

every impulse that would have turned another way. Wilfully he put aside the natural language of his thought, shutting his eyes, like Coriolanus at Volsci, to that which he dared not remember. And by holding thus before him the image of the woman who, whatever had come since, had at least stirred in his breast the stormiest wave of emotion which he had ever known, by recalling thus the remembrance of every word and pang of his former passion, he did contrive almost to believe that this half of his life was its whole, and was able to accept his lot with something like equanimity, glad on Elizabeth's behalf, and not sorry on his own.

The next day was fixed for his meeting with the vicar and churchwarden. Orlando was successful in carrying his own views without much annoying his coadjutors—a result which, indeed, he generally managed to achieve. After

discussion came luncheon, followed by an amicable parting.

Orlando, turning from Piccadilly northward, proceeded slowly up Bond Street, thence along Oxford Street, and so to Portland Place. In the short passage of Oxford Street, he found himself suddenly face to face with Viola. She was coming out of a shop, and a young lady was with her. A frank smile sprang into her face. She gave him a little bow of greeting, and paused, half a second, as if she would speak. To Orlando, the world stood suddenly still. The one vestige of self-command left to him was a knowledge that he must not pause. Mechanically he lifted his hat, mechanically he found the habitual accompanying smile, and then he hastened on. The sharp, bewildered emotion, the conflicting pain and joy, surged tumultuously for a moment, then pain rose highest. The violent, personal outcry of a hope

denied made itself heard, and the living love sprang up in rebellious self-assertion against the dead. He hardly knew how he found his way to his sister's house. There, thank Heaven, he was alone. He sat down alone in the sunny drawing-room. But the drawing-room was peopled with memories. Viola's laugh, Elizabeth's sad face, were present to him; there was the balcony where he had stood thinking of Elizabeth's grief, while Viola's voice still rang in his ears. Surely in that moment he had foreknown this. And now, what should he do—how escape from this terrible conflict which had come so suddenly upon him? There were moments in which he was tempted to tell himself that love so strong as his made a law for itself—that a sacrifice like this was out of the bounds of nature, and not to be required by any claims of duty. Then again he thought of himself renouncing Elizabeth, and present-

ing himself, with this story on his lips, to Viola—for between them there could be no love with half concealment. At that he shuddered. Reflected in the mirror of Viola's judgment, he saw himself treacherous, vacillating, culpable. No, not that; better any pain than that. And Elizabeth —was it possible that he should add to her sorrows? Thinking of her, his heart melted, and he seemed altogether base. He turned his mind back again to his former bitter agony of disappointment in losing her. Was nothing left now of all that deep feeling? All human affection seemed to him fugitive and despicable; he loathed the wavering of his own soul. And yet that first love had been a mistake, an illusion, a very dream and bubble. Viola was the true wife for him, the accomplishment of his nature—in the old best word, his helpmate. There came again the tide of unreasoning, irre-

pressible desire. How was it possible to abandon this hope? Would it not be the abandonment, too, of his own highest development, and of all his hopes of use and helpfulness to the world? He could never, now, fulfil the plans in which she had sympathized. He thought of his school, and the thought was a burning sting. He could never build it, now. To do so would be to renew the legend of that architect whose young wife was built up alive in the foundations of his work.

Then came upon him the mere, unsatisfied agony of suffering which has no shape in words. He dropped his face with a low moan upon his hands. For a time he had no distinct thought; his spirit merely groaned and groped in the dark, under an overmastering weight of pain. His hands clasped and unclasped themselves, and the low, repeated cry broke from his lips, "Oh, Viola! Viola!"

And yet, through all, he knew that his soul would drive him forward on the path of pain. In that dim knowledge lay the peculiar, sharpest pang. For when again he turned the other way, he knew that the betrayal of Elizabeth was the most frightful possibility of all. Not that—oh, not that—at whatever cost of pain! Thus from side to side, from pain to pain, he stumbled, in that conflict of duties and desires, which is the bitter, royal prerogative of humanity.

At last some points began to show light through the storm. Viola was saved, and Elizabeth would never know. For himself, there was the consolation of being the only sufferer. Whatever wrong was done was to himself. Viola, if indeed she had ever thought of him with more than mere friendly liking, would soon think of him no more. Alas! to look forward to that was a new torment. To touch upon that

future evoked a wild resolve that he would care for nothing else, but win her, and let all the world go. And then, in its former sequence, came the thought of her judgment; and the very depth of love for Viola strengthened his fealty to Elizabeth. Little by little, in reaction of ebb and flow, each returning wave of doubt left its mark a little higher than the last. The end left him where he had known beforehand that it would leave him. He must be true to Elizabeth; nothing else was possible. His life must live in hers—that way lay the only outlet. And he must not stay here in London, liable to meet Viola at any turning, as he had met her to-day, and to be tossed again into this sea of agonized trouble. He would go home, and grant himself the respite of two more solitary days. Then he would go to Sherborne-by-the-Sea, and, if Elizabeth would, Millie and Gilbert should be told. He would

feel easier when all way of retreat was cut off.

He fulfilled his plan. He arrived at Sherborne, next morning, remembering, as he could hardly fail to do, that previous home-coming, when, as now, his heart had borne a hidden, life-oppressing care. The present was the deeper wound, yet it was outwardly less intolerable. Whatever loss of joy may come with years, there comes at least the alleviating knowledge that it is possible to endure. The boy's despair is bitterer than the sorrows of the man, even though the later loss is recognized plainly as the greater. To-day, also, there was the feeling to support him that another's happiness depended on his constancy. There was a need for combat, and every combat brings its stimulus. No task of action is so hard as mere passive renunciation.

His house was solitary—ah, how much

more solitary than when he went away! Yet its solitude aroused vague thankfulness. He was free, here, still. Recognizing this thought, he was ashamed. It was not in his nature to satisfy himself with only an outward loyalty. He shrank from this unpremeditated turning of his mind as from a kind of meanness, feeling more guilty towards Elizabeth in the momentary harbouring of that thought than in the full self-avowal of his love for Viola.

As he sat alone, and as he walked alone and restless, under those trees which had seen Elizabeth and which had seen Viola, the panorama of pain and conflict, so familiar now that it seemed as old as his life, unrolled itself once more. The touch of his dog's head against his hand was enough to bring the overflow of a whole sea of pent-up emotion. It seemed to him for a few moments as if life could

not endure against this flood of pain. Then the stream rolled on, and he was left on firm footing again, but faint and exhausted, as with a bodily struggle.

He sat down upon the broad balustrade of the terrace. The afternoon sun was lighting the deep, late-summer greenness of lawn and tree. All this was his own—the lands of his fathers, assured by his own labour to those who might come after him. He would have given it all for leave to die without bringing pain to others. If the long struggle, the fruitless, illusive race of life might only be at an end! But there was Elizabeth. And she, no doubt, away at that other Sherborne, was thinking of him, never guessing. At that he raised his head, and his whole thoughts centred in the silent prayer that he might be true to her. He longed to take some step which might make his pledge irrevocable.

How if he went up to the cottage and told the Duncannons? The suggestion came like an answer to his prayers. A faint shadow of colour came back to his white face, and he rose up at once to put his thought into execution.

CHAPTER XII.

IN A COPSE AT SHERBORNE.

"There might at least be truth between us two,
If nothing else."

Aurora Leigh.

"Was it not well to speak, to have spoken once?"

Tennyson.

ORLANDO walked up to the cottage, and as he walked felt easier, upheld by his resolve. The servant who opened the door to him smiled as she saw him, having by this time no doubt at all of his being Viola's lover. She opened the door of the little drawing-room. Orlando heard at once the sound of many voices, and knew that Mr. and Mrs. Haverdike were here. He walked in and saw Viola. The room seemed full, but her presence was the one certainty.

The first moment of his entrance seemed an interval of endless length. Then every one was exclaiming in surprise. Walter Ashington was here too, he perceived.

In the next breath the exclamations took another form.

"What *have* you been doing to yourself?" asked Duncannon. "You look most awfully ill."

Walter Ashington was heard to observe that he never saw any one look worse, unless it was a man he knew who had just taken a double first.

Julia asked in a voice of concern whether he had not indeed been ill; and Viola said nothing, but looked at him hard, and then dropped her eyes to Rob, and lost all the brightness which had lightened her face as he came in. Orlando himself could hardly speak. To Viola, indeed, he said no word. Their hands met, but he could not look into her face.

She was troubled, puzzled. A flight of vague and wild conjectures passed across her brain, dim shadowings of some misapprehension, something said by some one else, some disturbing doubt darkening his mind.

Animated talk had been going on before his coming in, and was very soon renewed. Viola had been taking part in it, and she could not at once drop out. Orlando sat silent, hearing the voices about him as Christian might have heard them in the valley of the shadow of death. Through his own heart ran the cry, "My fate is harder than I can bear."

But the sharpest pang was yet to come. Viola spoke to him, appealing to his support in some opinion of hers. Her voice thrilled every nerve. To have looked at her, to have answered with any tone of heartiness, would have brought a whole outburst. He answered, without looking

up, and almost without knowing what words he used. "No doubt that you are right."

Viola had never heard that tone from him before. Was it pain? she asked herself. No one else seemed to be surprised or chilled; hers was the only voice smitten silent.

And then he turned to Mr. Haverdike, speaking violently and feverishly, and declaring extreme and contradictory views. Mr. Haverdike again appealed to herself, and she was obliged to say a few words.

Orlando, while she was yet speaking, moved away to a side-table and took up a book. In truth, his agitation had reached a point at which his utmost self-command could only hold him from crying out to her by name. He stood a moment by the table, then sat down, bending over the book. It was a book of engravings newly bought, one in which it was possible to be

interested, and the other talkers saw nothing amazing in his defection. They were laughing now at some absurd tale of Duncannon's, to be capped in the next minute by another from Walter Ashington.

Viola, meanwhile, had drawn near to Orlando. His evident illness, his strange manner, distressed her; she could not help approaching him, waiting for some sign or glance that might make it possible to speak. The sign came in an unlooked-for form. He drew a little away from her and bent a little closer over his book. The motion was very slight, but it was decisive. Her speech broke from her.

"Mr. Sherborne, have I done anything to offend you?"

To that, though still with averted eyes, came an answer in his usual voice—an answer which she vaguely felt, held more than she understood.

"No, indeed; how could you?"

"That was exactly what I was wondering." She paused, long enough to let him speak if he would; then, a little coldly, added, "I am glad it is not so." Her eyes, however, were gentler than her voice, and in them lingered the appeal which she would not again put into words.

Orlando had kept his eyes resolutely upon his book, trying to harden himself against the emotion aroused by her voice. Now he looked suddenly up. He met her gaze, in which resentment was struggling against that pathetic, mute inquiry, whether the fault lay in herself or in him. Alas! the truth was clear enough. His precautions came too late. His silence, his avoidance, could only pain, not save her—could only add to an inevitable separation the prolonging pain of uncertainty.

"Viola," said he, in a quick undertone, "will you let me speak to you?"

At the sound of her name upon his lips

her self-possession shrank away. She made a silent motion of the head, and moved away towards the open window. He followed her.

"Not now—not here," she said, scarcely above her breath.

She stooped down confusedly and stroked Rob's head.

Orlando did the same, and his voice murmured at her ear, "Will you come out with me into the copse?"

The tone of entreaty, all the more urgent for being so subdued, was not to be resisted.

She answered simply, "Yes," and raised her head again. After an instant she said, speaking as low as he had done, "If you go and wait for me in the copse, I will meet you in a few minutes."

Their words had passed quickly—the others were engaged in their own talk. No one had heard or heeded.

Orlando drew near once more to the talkers.

"I think I must be going," said he. His natural manner had come back to him, and only his excessive paleness gave any unreality to his smile. "I thought I would just come up for a few minutes. I think I may very likely go away again on Monday, to Sherborne-by-the-Sea. My sister and the children are there."

"I hope the sea-air will send you back looking better," said Julia, as she shook hands with him. "I am sure London has not suited you well."

"London is very trying at this season of the year," said Mrs. Haverdike. As she spoke, an odd little, absent look came into her face, for it had occurred to her that Mr. Sherborne looked to-day like a Burne Jones.

To Viola Orlando said no 'good-bye,' feeling that it would be a hypocrisy; but

they touched each other's hands, and the absence of words passed unnoted.

He went out into the fresh open air, and turned his steps to the little copse at the back of the house, whither they had gone to listen for the nightingale. And there, as he stood waiting, leaning against a tree, the strongest temptation of his life came to him. In the first moment of certainty that Viola loved him, he had felt, through all the new complication of pain, a light of relief and joy. Come what might, they were at one—they loved each other; he could tell her everything. This had been the spirit in which he begged her to give him hearing; but now, as he waited, came another and a lower impulse. It would be so easy to meet her with the confession only of his own love, and to conceal from her all the wild, mistaken story of the last three wretched days. He had come, all unawares, to the supreme

decision of his life. His aspiration, from boyhood up, had been towards something nobler than mere self-gratification, but never until now had the principle of his life been brought face to face with an opposing passion. He did not reflect thus upon his own position. It is not in the stress of conflict that we have time to inquire into our own motives; there is time only for action, and our action seems to be governed by some not-to-be-resisted current, which is indeed the weight of habit. In Orlando this power of habit was for a moment in abeyance, driven out by the wilder force of passion. When he foreshadowed his life, lying among the trees at Willingshurst, he had not dreamed of such a struggle as this. For a brief space the fierce rush of personal longing carried all before it. He no longer reasoned, no longer thought. Nothing existed for him but the blind impulse urging

him to snatch his heart's desire. But the eagerness of passion overshot itself, and brought recoil. Among the longings for attainment rose a thought of its impunity. He drew back with a sudden shock. Had it, indeed, been in his thought to hurt Elizabeth because he could do it easily? Why, anything was possible but that. If she had been powerful to pursue him, to bring him in any way to shame and punishment, then, perhaps, he might have done it, but not now. He put his hand for an instant across his eyes, and the cry went up from his heart, "Not that, O God —not that! Save me from falling into that."

Again the world put itself back into its old place. He began to see distinctly, like a man recovering from a blow. No, there was no way but the one. Viola and he must endure. The thought of Viola's pain brought no such crushing compunc-

tion. He felt no desire to shield her by any concealment of the truth. His sense of union lay too deep for that—so deep, that the half-truth which was loyalty to Elizabeth would have been treason to Viola. In that one fact lay the deepest evidence of fitness between them.

Then he saw her coming towards him through the trees, and went forward to meet her. She, too, was a little paler than usual, but walked with her customary firm, quick tread. She could form no idea of what he would have to say to her. That he loved her she could hardly doubt, but she understood that no mere declaration of love was coming.

They met, and stood still under the trees.

"Thank you for coming," said Orlando.

Then followed an instant of agitated silence on both sides.

"I have no right," he began, "to ask

you to hear anything about myself. I suppose most people would tell me I ought just to hold my tongue, and keep out of the way; but I can't—to you."

Viola's colour deepened a little, but her clear eyes were steady. She answered quickly, yet with a kind of solemnity in her voice, "Nothing would hurt me more than that you should."

The words, with their tacit recognition of a mutual love, stirred in Orlando's heart that double thrill of delight and pain which goes to the making of any deep emotion. With the quickened pulses came a warmer, but tumultuous haste of resolve, differing —ah, how immeasurably!—from the tender, carefully chosen words in which it had been possible to speak to Elizabeth.

"I must speak to you openly, this once. I know it never must be again. I cannot go away and leave you to think, perhaps, that, through all these months, I had been

assuming a feeling which had no existence: playing with you, amusing myself. It is not so, Viola. May I call you Viola, this once? Believe me, it is not so."

"I never thought it was so," she answered, in a low, shaken voice.

He went on, his utterance falling into deeper, hurried notes. "These months, since I have known you, have been a new life to me. I have never loved any human being as I have loved you. I never can, or shall, again. I did not think there could be such a love, 'such sober certainty of waking bliss.' If you had been a man, I should have desired to have you for my best and dearest friend. There is not a word or a thought of yours but goes home to my soul, and makes me the better for it. And yet I cannot say to you, 'Give me your love, Viola.' Four days ago, I might have done it freely. Ah! I wish I had. No, no—don't let me wish that.

I am glad I did not know. Help me, Viola—help me. I must tell you. I must make your knowledge a barrier. I know you will strengthen the best side of me."

"I will try," she answered; and the words had in them a strange mingling of a cry of weakness and a promise of strength.

Yet Orlando could not command himself sufficiently to tell his story. His eyes clung to Viola's face, appealing vainly to fate for some reprieve.

"Let me tell you, then," he said at last. "No one knows but you. It makes the whole story of my life, really."

Again he paused, setting his teeth together and clenching his hands. His heart ached to cry out the sorrows of the present. He had to battle with himself for force of self-repression, and the narration, when it came, flowed with an unnatural calm.

"Years ago, in the autumn before I first knew your mother, I met Miss Glendinning——"

A little, a very little, spasm of change passed over Viola's face. She knew now what was coming.

"It was at Willingshurst," Orlando continued, "in a little wood there, not unlike this, but it was later in the year. I had been reading some of the Odyssey, and by-and-by I began to think about my own life instead, and to lay plans for the future. I was so hopeful, so full of expectation—life seemed so easy and so clear; the world has never been quite the same as it was then. And presently, among the singing of the birds, I fell asleep. And when I awoke, she was coming along the path, coming as you came, just now. She did not see me. She was looking before her with a kind of grave, sweet, wondering look. Nothing that I could say would

give you an idea of how beautiful she was; she was like a creature out of a dream. Oh, to think what she is now!"

He paused, and the dog, seeing Viola's attention disengaged, laid his head against her hand. For the first time she failed to answer the caress. Her earnest eyes were fixed upon Orlando. Her face bade him go on.

"My mind was full of her from that moment. I was just one and twenty, and I had never even fancied that I was in love before. It was like a torrent that carried me away. When I look back on it now, it seems a mystery. After that, I met her down there, three times. I can remember every word she said to me still. Then I went back to college. It was all for her sake that I worked. In every thought I had, she was the centre. Then, in the spring, I went to London, on purpose to see her. I saw her then, often.

I kept hoping more and more. Her aunt seemed to pay special attention to me, and so did she too. It was because of Gilbert Oakes—for Millie's sake—but I knew nothing of that. Then, when I spoke to her, she was engaged. She had engaged herself that very day that I saw her first."

"Oh!" murmured Viola, breathing into the word a whole world of sorrowful sympathy. Self-consideration had slipped from her. Her whole mind was living in his story.

Orlando, too, was back in the past.

"I can't tell you how I felt. It seemed impossible to live. It was the day after that that I saw you first—you know, I told you."

The flow of his words broke off, and the gaze fixed upon Viola changed. A deep pain of the present rose into his eyes. He sighed, thinking of the bright young face which had glanced up at him then, and of

the sad earnestness resting upon it for his sake now.

"Yes," said Viola, gently, but with a colour slightly raised, and in a tone which besought him not to linger upon that.

Hurriedly, he continued his tale.

"I went away to Sherborne-by-the-Sea. Oh, I can't speak of that day. It is frightful to think what one can suffer and no one can do any good. But in the evening there, everything put itself straight to me, and I knew that I must come home and live my life out as well as I could, and not let any one else be the worse for my pain."

The emotions changing upon Viola's face, like shifting reflections in a mirror, deepened into a full sympathy that was admiration and approval as well.

Orlando, forcing himself to controlled speech, went on.

"Then there was Millie's wedding. Of course we met then. After that she went

away. You know about Captain Grove; you have heard them speak of him. I kept on at Sherborne, doing what I could. There was my father to work for. But all those years I never left off thinking about her. And yet I know, now, that I hardly really knew her at all. Of her thoughts, her opinions, her tastes, I hardly knew anything. But one can love upon so little knowledge. I never thought that any other love could come into my life. But then I met *you*." His voice changed again from mere narration into the tone of direct speech. "I have no right, Viola, I know I have no right, to speak of that." He stopped himself, moved a step away, turned back, and once more pursued the tale, in a quicker, lower key. "Then she came home. You know her story. She is so changed, so worn. I found she had thought of me as true to her all those years. She took something

I said as confirmation of it. Heaven knows I didn't mean it so as I said it, and yet there is nothing I would not have been glad to do for her, for very pity and sorrow. I could not look her in the face and say, 'It is a mistake; I meant nothing; I love another woman.' And I did not even wish to say it. I did not feel as if it mattered about me, if only I could make some amends to her for all that she had gone through. I told her that, if she could be happy in marrying me, she would make me happier than I had ever hoped to be. And it was true, Viola. I could not have known any happiness if she were to be sacrificed to it. If I had only known that you cared! But I thought you did not know. I had never spoken to you. I never dreamed but that you had escaped. And for myself, I thought that I could bear it. I did not know how much I cared. But then I met you, you remember,

in Oxford Street. I knew then. I felt that I must go away—keep away. I could not face *her* till I had had the struggle out, alone. I came here, thinking you were in London. And then—— Oh, my dear, that I should have brought this upon you!"

"Don't," said Viola, quickly. "You must not think that. I would rather have this—from you—than any other happiness."

He looked up and stretched out his hands to her, saying, with a kind of despair, "I can't sacrifice her, Viola. It is the only hope left for her. We must bear it as we can."

She put her hands into his and pressed them close. "Yes, yes. It is better so. I am glad you told me."

They stood for a little space in silence, holding each other by the hands, their eyes fixed upon each other, full of deep, hopeless regrets.

"We must keep apart," said Viola. "There has been no doubt, no misunderstanding; we need not be afraid to think of one another. Happiness is not all—happiness, I mean, for oneself. You must never think I am sorry. I never shall be."

She spoke with pauses, slowly, forcing back the bitterer thoughts that came between. If it had not been for the need of helping Orlando, she could have flung her arms round the dog or round one of these trees, and wept bitterly for her own griefs, and because she must go away and see them no more.

"You forgive me, then?" said Orlando.

"There's nothing to be forgiven," she answered. "It is our misfortune. It came so. I would not have it changed." Then, after a moment, "You will try to be as happy as you can, won't you? There is so much for you to do, here in Sherborne. And some day you will be

in parliament. One can't be so very unhappy, if only one has one's work."

"And you?" said Orlando. "You think only about me. It is the pain I have brought on you that hurts me most."

"Yes—I know. But I shall bear it. You must not be afraid because of me. There's work for me, too. You know," with a little half-smile that tried to be bright as well as courageous, "I never was brought up to think marriage the only aim of a woman's life."

Orlando could not answer; to him the pain was too familiar for that first enthusiasm of brave acceptance.

"You won't let me feel that I have spoiled your life, will you?" said she, with tender earnestness.

Quick came Orlando's response. "No, never. I'll do what I can, Viola. I will bear it all. Only not now. Don't ask me not to be sorry, now. Oh, to stand here,

and to touch you, and see you look at me like that, and to know that it is all no use!"

"It's hard—oh, it's hard!" said Viola, breaking out for the first time into a kind of cry. "Through all those years—all the years!"

Her voice wavered; she stopped short, and a few tears ran down her face.

There was a pause of silence, full of more despair than any words. Then Viola, freeing her one hand, wiped her eyes and said, tremulously still, "I must go. It is no use." Her voice changed and steadied as she went on. "I begin to understand now," she said, slowly, "how there should be no marrying, nor giving in marriage, in heaven. I suppose life comes to be like that to most people—living in tents—going on to something better. We shall come out, by-and-by."

"Ah, but stay a minute, Viola, now—the last time."

She turned towards him again, and looking up with all her soul in her eyes, gave him her right hand and said, steadfastly, "Good-bye."

Orlando yielded to the appeal, took her hand, and answered slowly, "Good-bye, then—for ever—in this life."

For a moment yet they stood hand to hand, and looking into each other's faces. Then, slowly, he let loose her hand, and turning from her, went.

Rob, lying lazily, and blinking on the path, started up to follow. Viola, when she saw the dog too moving to depart, felt the whole rush of her grief breaking on her in a flood. Faintly, in a trembling voice, too low to reach Orlando, she called the dog by his name.

He paused and turned, and then came back. The curving path divided Orlando from her. It was over—all over. She was alone for ever—through all the years.

She broke forth into a low-voiced moaning. Softly the dog's head touched her hand, and his gaze of bewildered, dumb sympathy sought her face. Dropping on her knees, she threw her arms round him, pressed his rough head to her soft cheeks, and wept fiercely.

CHAPTER XIII.

TOO LATE.

"To toil, to think, to long, to grieve,
Is such my future fate?
The morn was dreary, must the eve
Be also desolate?"

Charlotte Brontë.

ELIZABETH was sitting with Millie by an open window, overlooking the parade of Sherborne-by-the-Sea. Below on the beach were the children with their nurse: farther out upon the bay, dimly visible in the sunshine, was Gilbert's boat.

It was ten o'clock, the hour at which letters might begin to be looked for.

"I hope there won't be a letter from Orlando to say he can't come to day," said Millie, placidly, as she moved her

head from side to side, contemplating her work.

"I hope not," said Elizabeth, quietly. The long habit of self-repression made it easy to speak with no tone of emotion.

"One can never be quite sure of him," pursued Millie; "he is busy in so many ways."

Elizabeth was so certain of his coming that she could not say anything which might seem to express a doubt. She sat, leaning back in silence, remembering his words in the sweet, near past, and looking on with assured hope to that future, which was no longer a dream too perfect for fulfilment, but a possession to be proclaimed to-day or to-morrow. How would Millie and Gilbert receive the news? Gilbert, perhaps, would be found to have had his suspicions long ago. Millie had certainly been in the dark long ago, but lately she had once or twice seemed almost to hint at such a thing.

'All things come round to him who only waits,' and at last, after all these years, happiness was coming to her. Life was once more to be no pain. And in the meanwhile was an interim of balmy repose. The warm, summer air breathed through the wide-open window, lifting the light curtain and gently stirring the hair upon her forehead. Without, lay long, level-stretching lines of land and sea, softened by hazy air-tints to harmonies of grey. The subdued tones were a refreshment to her soul after the vivid colouring, the crisp air, and sharp outlines of her mountain-land of exile. Here was hope and peace, and an after-summer, sweeter than the half-visionary dreams of youth. As she sat, her lips parted slowly to a smile, and a faint colour, soft as the outer pink of a pale rose, crept upward on her cheek. Millie looking up, as she listened to the approaching knockings of the postman,

thought that the sea-air was working wonders.

And now the postman was at the door, and the letters were brought in. Among them was a little packet bearing the Sherborne post-mark, and redirected from London by Orlando.

"What's this?" said Millie. "It looks like photographs. Suppose you open it, Lizzie. Oh, here's a letter belonging to it; I think it must be from Mrs. Duncannon."

Elizabeth opened the packet, at that, with some interest. It did contain some eight or nine cabinet-sized photographs, from pictures. Among them was one representing the single figure of a young woman in an antique dress. Elizabeth, looking at it among the others, supposed it to be taken, like them, from a painting. Millie, meanwhile, was reading her letter.

"Yes, they are from Mr. Duncannon's

pictures. Mrs. Haverdike sends them. She says she thought Orlando would be interested in seeing them. I dare say he will. Oh, and there's one of Viola, she says, in the dress she was painted in; but I must send that back, for there's only that one copy, which Mrs. Haverdike begged to have done. I shall like to see that."

"This is it, I suppose."

"Oh yes; that's very good. Let me see. I don't think you have ever seen Viola Cash, have you? But I dare say you have heard Orlando speak of her. She is Mrs. Duncannon's sister, you know."

"I think perhaps I did see her, years ago, in the Academy one day. There were some ladies with Mr. Duncannon, and I noticed them, without knowing who they were, because they looked so nice."

She bent to look at the photograph once

more. It was the portrait of Viola in the dress of Elaine; but it did not represent her standing in the attitude of her picture. Here her full face was shown, and the tea-tray had been replaced by something which, in the photograph, at least, looked like a veritable shield. Some remembrance, perhaps, of the ill-fated maiden of Astolat had brought an unwonted pathos to the clear and self-possessed face. The candid eyes seemed to hold recognition of some sad necessity, the just-closed mouth drooped a little at the corners; the whole expression was an expression of farewell.

"It is a pretty face," said Elizabeth.

"*I* think so," said Millie, with emphasis. "Orlando will be interested in this one, at least."

Elizabeth, always shrinking from some possible new-coming pain, looked up, pressing her lips together.

Millie was still smiling upon Viola's photograph.

"Your brother admires Miss Cash, then, too?" said Elizabeth at last.

Millie, looking up with a laugh in her eyes, answered, "I am not bound to keep his secrets when he does not confide them to me, am I?"

For a moment a quick rush of relief brought back warmth to Elizabeth's heart. Millie knew — she guessed. She was teasing her. How foolish to be alarmed! She, too, could smile again, and look up, with half-appealing, timid eyes, into Millie's.

"And, any way, I might tell *you*," Millie went on. "I know *you* would not let it go any further. He has not said a word to me, you know; but I can see it well enough. I can hear it in the very tone of his voice when he speaks her name. Oh, I am very glad about it, and so is Gilbert. It has been my greatest wish for years that Orlando should marry. And

she *is* such a nice girl, Lizzie. I am sure you will like her."

Elizabeth sat quite still. She gave no sign of pain by word or motion, but she felt herself turn sick at heart, and for a moment sound and sight grew vague to her. She had been tempted to think the power of suffering dead within her; but here, at an unexpected opening, the familiar face looked in.

Millie was still speaking. "She is a good deal younger than he is—six or seven years, I should think; but I think that is all the better. There is six years' difference between Gilbert and me. Oh, she will suit him admirably. Such a clever girl—so bright and fresh! Only, I wish he would make haste and settle it. I have been expecting to hear something about it for weeks now."

"Perhaps you are mistaken," said Elizabeth. "You know one does make those mistakes—sometimes."

It was an agony to her to speak; but it was so essential that she should know the truth. Perhaps the terror might be but a phantom, after all.

"Ah, but I am not mistaken," said Millie, with a little nod. "You would know, if you had seen them together. Gilbert thinks so too; and you know, Lizzie, that Gilbert is not a person to judge hastily. He used to have an idea that Orlando had had some love-fancy, long ago, that we never knew of. But I was sure that could not be. My own notion is, that it was for poor papa's sake he kept single. You remember, don't you, how they were all in all to each other?"

"Yes," Elizabeth answered, faintly. Then, gathering up her courage to the effort, "Do you fancy he has had —this in his mind—long?"

"No, not *very* long, you know. I don't think he knew her very much until she

went to stay with the Duncannons at Easter. Well, and this is August, isn't it? Oh, that is quite long enough, for I think they saw each other almost every day in Sherborne. But, of course, you won't say anything about it, will you, Lizzie? I always think it is no good to talk about things of that kind; but I thought I would just give you a hint, because, you know, you are really one of ourselves."

Elizabeth endured in silence, but when Millie proposed that they also should now go down to the sea, she managed to say that she felt rather faint, and would go and lie down for a little time. She ought not, perhaps, to have sat in the full sunshine, she added, afraid, when she had spoken, lest Millie should read in her words the confession that seemed so evident to herself.

Millie was full of concern. "Yes, you do look quite pale again. I am so sorry.

I thought you were looking so much better. You had better go up and rest, so that you may be quite fresh when Gilbert and Orlando come in. Let me go up with you."

"No, no," said Elizabeth, almost pettishly. "No, indeed; I don't want any one. I shall be better again presently. Go out to your babes, Millie. I would rather you did."

Millie yielded; and, rising, set the photograph of Viola conspicuously on the centre of the mantelshelf. "You will come out, if you feel inclined, won't you?" said she.

"Oh yes," Elizabeth answered; and then, at last, was allowed to go away and be alone.

Her pain was not articulate as yet; she only felt, as yet, that she had slipped back into the gulf.

Now, lying on her bed, with a blind

drawn down between herself and the keen sunlight, she began to search and to consider. That there was some truth in Millie's opinion she did not doubt. But how much was truth, and which part? Had he indeed begun to love Viola, and then, at her coming, fallen under the old sway again? If that were so—and oh that it might be so!—nothing should divide them. She would cling to him, whatever might be said or thought—if only he loved her. Love was all. No such claim or duty as Orlando could owe to Viola could be strong enough to come between them. A glow came to her heart at the thought of bidding the world defiance on the ground of their mutual love. Then came the opposing fear. How if the contrary of all this was true? How if his love indeed was Viola's, and he was making, even now, for her sake that sacrifice of love whose obligation she had

just abjured? From that thought she shrank most, perhaps because her belief inclined to it the most. Then, falling to a lower key, she asked herself whether Orlando might not be playing with two loves at once—entangled in a double web; not wholly true to either allegiance, nor wholly false? Men were so. Edward would have been so. But Orlando? Was there no such thing as true love fulfilled on earth? Must it be always thus—a battle, a struggle of the weaker to maintain ground against the stronger? For her, at least, it seemed there must be no peace; for to-day he would be here, and what must she do? She must find the truth, somehow. She must not fall into any second illusion, worse than the first. If Orlando should be like Captain Grove! She broke down into an outburst of agony. She shed no tear, but moved her face to and fro upon the pillows, moaning under her breath.

Two hours or so later, she came down into the room which she had left. The Venetian blinds flapped slowly on the window-sills, and the room was full of a dark-green twilight. Elizabeth went to the portrait leaning against a vase over the fireplace. She looked at it long and earnestly, her eyes growing accustomed to the half-light. That was the face, then. Yes, it was the face of a woman whom Orlando might love; true, earnest, and simple.

"But she will never love him as I do—never."

Her eyes rose to her own face, reflected in the glass above. Turning away, she sat down in a great easy chair by the window. The unconscious, habitual grace of every motion and attitude made her no unfitting subject for a picture as she sat. The dim light veiled the lines worn by pain and sorrow in her face, but left its

spiritualized refinement of outline to be plainly seen. Slowly, her mind was turning towards a resolve. If it should be as she began, against her will, to believe, Orlando's life should not be blasted, a second time, by her. Oh, how true had been her own words of herself, 'Where'er I came, I brought calamity!' But not to him. She would not—indeed, she *could* not, now that she knew it—bring calamity to him. But, as yet, she did not know it—not quite surely. For this one day she might still live as if her hope were true. Then, rising, she fetched her hat and parasol, and went out to Millie on the beach. Millie and the children were wearing white dresses with knots of black ribbon upon them, and white, muslin-trimmed hats. Elizabeth, as she moved towards them, felt herself the only blot upon the fresh, light-coloured landscape. For a while she sat, hearing the babble of the children;

then it was time for their early dinner, and Millie and she went in with them.

They did not go out again, and when Orlando arrived, late in the afternoon, he found Millie and Elizabeth together, in that front room which was no longer sunny. Elizabeth's first glance showed her that he was looking ill, worn, worried, and anxious. In answer to Millie he said that he was tired. No, he had not eaten, but he was not hungry—it was too hot to eat. But Elizabeth saw more in his face than mere fatigue. As he turned from his sister, his eyes fell upon the photograph; he crossed the room at once and took it up. Millie looked at Elizabeth and smiled. Elizabeth, watching Orlando with eager terror, saw his face, reflected in the glass, change and turn pale. A look came over it of unutterable, poignant tenderness—such a look as he had never turned upon herself. It recalled Millie's words, "I can

hear it in the very tone of his voice when he speaks her name." She had no doubt, any longer.

"Is it not good?" asked Millie.

"Yes, very good," he answered, laying it down and coming to seat himself by Elizabeth.

The look of love had gone, but the paleness remained, and presently she saw a cloud of pain and care coming back.

"Have you seen anything of the Cashes since we came away?" asked Millie.

"I was down at Sherborne on Saturday. I saw the Duncannons and Miss Cash then."

"Oh, she is with them still, then?"

"Yes. Are these Duncannon's paintings? Have you seen these?"

This to Elizabeth, and in the peculiar tone of care and deference which he used always towards her.

"Yes, I have seen them, thank you."

Orlando, looking up to receive her answer, saw the change in her face too.

"You are not looking so well," said he, quickly.

"I was a little tired, that is all."

She managed to speak in her usual voice; to smile was more than she could do.

She could see, as through a clear water, every fluctuation of his feeling; could understand all that he had intended and tried to do. Was there any other man who would have done this? Oh, and all the more must she set him free. What a love might have been hers once! But now it was too late. Never, even in the year when he knew her first, had she brought *that* look into his eyes.

And now came in Gilbert from the sea, very much sunburnt, to a tint, not of brown, but of red, and bringing tales of successful sea-fishing.

"Where was Rob?" he asked. Surely

Orlando had not disappointed the children by not bringing Rob.

"Rob is at Sherborne-on-Land," said Orlando, and he looked a little embarrassed.

"Left poor Rob to solitude and the tender mercies of servants! What a shame!" said Gilbert.

"He is not left to the servants. He is at the Duncannons', with Miss Cash—whom he is fonder of than anybody. I think I shall have to give him to her, for his own sake."

He did not look up as he spoke. To Elizabeth every word was confirmation. He had broken with that part of his life. He was even putting away from him his dog. She judged wrongly, not appreciating—as perhaps it was hardly possible that she should—the depth of union between Orlando and Viola, to which the breaking or retaining of such an outward bond could

do nothing. Far other had been Orlando's thought. He had left her the dog as the one thing which he might dare to give her, and with some faint hope that the dumb affection which had been so true to him might be a presence of comfort to her.

Gilbert said a few words of surprise. Millie preserved a complete silence, but smiled to herself in the happy belief of her full comprehension.

"Have you seen that photograph of Viola Cash, Gilbert?" she asked, presently.

"Oh,—ah. But how did she come to be taken in this outlandish costume?"

"Oh, she stood for one of her brother-in-law's pictures in it, and Mrs. Haverdike persuaded her to be taken in it."

"Have you seen the picture, Orlando?" asked Gilbert.

"Yes; I saw Duncannon painting it. You'll see a photograph of it among the others, but I fancy it is not quite finished."

"Oh, I suppose it is Elaine. I should never have thought of painting her for anything so sentimental."

"I wonder whether that is all her own hair?" said Millie.

"Yes, it is," said Orlando, rather sharply; and then, in a quieter tone, "I happened to see it painting, as I said."

Then the talk flowed off into other channels, and Viola's name was mentioned no more; but Elizabeth's mind was occupied still by the graceful figure of the picture, the long, shining hair, and the sweet, serious face of her unseen rival.

Orlando on his part had come to Sherborne desiring to proclaim his engagement at the earliest moment that Elizabeth would permit, and resolving to plead urgently for a speedy marriage. While all remained hidden, every moment held the possibility of change of resolution. He longed to put out of his power that perpetual renewal of

decision; it would be better to be bound indissolubly; embarked definitely upon his course, and free from the haunting underthought that still it was time to turn back.

And meanwhile it should be his endeavour to make Elizabeth happy and at peace. His manner to her to-night had more of the tone of a lover than ever before. She, however, rather shrank away, anxious before all things not to arouse suspicion in Millie; and Orlando, when he perceived that she shrank, obeyed her wish by an immediate return to his former modes of speech. She noticed that when no longer devoting himself to her, he sank into depressed silence, and that when some one spoke to him, he started. Her heart sank within her. Oh, if the long battle were only over—if Heaven had but vouchsafed to her the mercy of death, that she might be lying, now, under the cypresses at Nice with her father! Yet another

landmark of pain must be reached, and passed, to-morrow. It would be a better fate to drop upon her course to-night, and never need to rise and struggle any more —a better fate, but not hers.

And to Orlando too it would have seemed a happiness to lay down the load of life. A constant shame pursued him; he bore about a sense of guilt, of falsehood, of dishonour. He who, all his life, had had so high an idea of simplicity and sincerity, how did it happen that he had become involved in a course of imperative deceit? How had he brought his life to such a pass as this? Ah, if it were his own life only! To him, as to Elizabeth, the night came as a respite. To-morrow the battle again, but for to-night solitude, and peace from the fear of self-betrayal.

CHAPTER XIV.

SET FREE.

"It is a truth (and it would be a very sad one but for the higher hopes which it suggests) that no great mistake, whether acted or endured in our mortal sphere, is ever really set right. Time, the continual vicissitude of circumstances, and the invariable inopportunity of death, render it impossible. If, after long lapse of years, the right seems to be in our power, we find no niche to set it in. The better remedy is for the sufferer to pass on, and leave what he once thought his irreparable ruin behind him."—*Nathaniel Hawthorne.*

The morning rose blue over the hazy sea, bringing back its burden of pain. To Orlando the misery of each returning day became more and more insupportable. The sole thought of comfort in his life was the thought that Elizabeth would be happy. For her sake he would strive to put off the outward appearance of his

trouble. Happily, he thought, she was less clear-sighted than Viola. Yet, when they met at breakfast, Elizabeth could read his face like a book, and knew afresh that he was yielding his life for her sake.

Above that sunny front room where they had breakfasted was another, smaller, which was considered to be specially reserved for Cousin Lizzie. Thither she went after breakfast, taking a book in her hand. Orlando, she knew, was going to look at some building that was being erected at the northern part of the village. He would not be long, he had said, in coming back. She stationed herself by the open window to watch for his return. And here, presently, she saw him come, his dark face bent down a little, full of thought. As he neared the house he looked up. She beckoned, and saw his face reply. In another minute, he was in the room.

She came towards him.

"I want to speak to you, please."

"Yes," said Orlando, gently attentive to gather her least wish.

"I have been thinking about our future and about myself. Will you blame me, I wonder, if I do what seems strange? Will you think me very fickle if I tell you that I want to go back from my word?"

So far she had said her lesson bravely and successfully, but in rehearsing it to herself she had omitted to reckon for her hearer's attitude, and the surprised—ay, surely, the *grieved*—expression of his eyes threw her from her calm; her prepared lesson broke down into a sudden low-voiced cry. "Oh, don't, don't look at me like that!"

"What?" said Orlando—"what is it that you mean? You want to go back from your word?"

As he spoke, a slow red deepened up-

wards from his lips, and Elizabeth saw, through the surprise and grief, the throb of another change, slight and repressed, but like the lifting of a cloud.

Sickening certainty came upon her. For the first time she knew that she had hoped, against hope, for some rebellion, some denial, some quick demand of cause. How could she—oh, how could she carry out her task? She must; there was no hope; she must.

"Yes," she said, finding only the one word to cling to, and as she said it, getting strength to go on to the next. "Yes, I must—indeed I must. You must forgive me. I was dazzled for a moment. I ought to have known. The past can't come back again.

'There are no birds in last year's nests.'"

Her words came slowly, weighted by a terrible sense of inevitability. One by one, a few slow tears gathered and ran down her face.

"Don't, Elizabeth, don't. It breaks my heart to hear you. Is there anything that I have done or said to wound you? My dear, the only hope that is left me now is the hope of making you happy. I have made a failure of my life in so many ways; don't tell me that I have failed in this too."

He drew his arm round her gently.

What if she yielded now? Why, why, should she not take this, her last hope, which, he said, was his hope too? There are moments in which we are tempted to wish our highest motives away, that we might take the desire of our hearts ruthlessly and be at ease. Oh for the lower conscience which could be content to marry him, and believe that by-and-by she would be able to make him happy! But deeper down lay the knowledge that, though she should die of pain, she would be constrained to go on to the end. She shook her head, faintly, desperately, as the martyr

might at the stake, putting away the dear hope of life which yet his soul cries out for.

"Not your fault—no fault of yours—nothing you have done or said. We make our lives. The wheel can't be turned back again: the old memory was better."

Orlando, still holding her in his embrace, felt every word go to his heart. All personal hopes, all thought of Viola, melted away before the intense, soul-oppressing desire to atone to Elizabeth for all the sufferings of her life. And his own inability to bring back the old love was but one cause for atonement the more.

"You are not angry with me, are you?" said she, watching his face. "I am only doing what I know is for the best."

"Angry with you! No, indeed. Heaven forbid that I should hold you to a promise that is not for your happiness. But I hoped it would have made you happy."

"I think the days when I might have

been happy are gone for ever. Long ago, when you loved me first, perhaps—— But it is too late now. You must let me go, Orlando; it is all that you can do. I shall always be grateful to you for all you would have done for me."

Her voice lingered upon his name. She could not bear to withdraw herself from the touch of his arm. Soon the memory of these things would be all that would be left her. Then came Orlando's words, soft as the touch of loving hands with balm to a wound.

"Trust me, Elizabeth; let me try to make you happy."

The memory came back to her of a morning when she also had said, "I will try to make you happy."

All the ensuing, futile sorrow and labour of soul rolled in swift panorama before her. Alas, "Let me make you happy," is not the cry of love. She knew that even

Orlando, if he were wooing Viola, would have pleaded, "Make me happy!" Should she accept from him all the long, Danäid labour which she had undergone for Captain Grove? That thought gave her back her resolution.

"I do trust you—with my whole heart I trust you—but, as your wife, I could never be happy, now. I can't explain it; it is like tearing my heart out to try. You must believe me and forgive me. You must let me go, Orlando. Indeed, it is better so."

Sighing, he dropped his arm from around her; his hand touched hers. "At least, we may be friends, Elizabeth."

The tone, with a sudden echo in it of that day in the Botanical Gardens, so long ago, seemed to melt her heart. She knew that, from this day, they must hardly meet, but of what avail would it be to say so?

She answered apathetically, "Yes." But

inwardly she was battling against the fierce impulse to pour forth the whole truth in a flood of passionate words. Let her hasten to make an end. She lifted her eyes slowly, and said, "Good-bye."

It sounded like a farewell spoken at the foot of a scaffold. To Orlando, all uncomprehending as he was, came somewhat the feeling of one who is forced to turn back into the world, leaving his friend to go alone through that terrible gate into the mystery beyond.

"Elizabeth!" said he.

The appeal, urgent, yet infinitely tender, forced her, in spite of herself, to look up. The mute anguish of her eyes held its own answer.

"Is this for my sake?" said Orlando, his voice falling.

For a moment there was no reply. Then came the words, drawn from her, and spoken quickly, in a thin, high tone,

the cry of utmost pain, "You will marry some one happier—fitter for you than I could ever have been."

Orlando's face crimsoned in one flush, as it might have done at a sudden blow.

"Never, Elizabeth—never; unless you can look me in the face and tell me that you don't love me."

The troubled terror of her eyes rather grew than faded.

"No, no," she answered, vehemently. "Indeed, it can't be. I have known what it is to be always trying—always labouring to make up for a love that you cannot give. I know it all. I can't let you do that for me. Nothing that I have suffered would be a suffering like that."

To Orlando it seemed that no suffering of his had been like this moment's.

"You say you trust me, Elizabeth; then trust me altogether. It would never be like that past, my dear. There would

never be a whisper of reproach of you, not only on my lips—you know that—but in my heart."

"Oh, I know—I know!" she answered. "But the one thing that would make life worth living would be gone away from you. I should never be able to hear her name without knowing that I had wronged you. I did not mean to tell you—I did not mean to pain you; but the truth is best, after all, and you have found me out. It is true, Orlando; I never could be happy as your wife—never. If you had loved me best—ah! then, perhaps, it might have been. But you won't be so cruel now as to tell me so, when it is not true. I know you would have done everything for me, and never let me guess. But I should have guessed all the same, and I should have been more, more miserable than I ever have been yet."

"Time would have altered everything,"

said Orlando, with the accent of hardly endurable pain. "And now that you know it all, I say still, as I said to you that day in the gardens, that if I may bring back some happiness to you, my life will satisfy me better than any other way."

"Oh, Orlando, don't!—don't! You only make it worse. I know all that, and that is the very reason why it can never be. Could you be happy to let—Viola—do this for you?"

"Heaven forbid!" said Orlando, startled into emphatic truth.

Elizabeth smiled, sadly enough, and let the smile drop again.

"You see? Now you understand?"

Orlando stood silent, answered out of his own mouth.

She drew a little nearer.

"We have been unfortunate to one another; but it is all over now. I am glad to have known that there was a man

in the world who would do such a thing. You have brought me more comfort than pain. I want you to remember that, always. When I was away and in trouble, and tempted very much sometimes, I used to think of you, and of what you would have done. We must not meet again yet; not for a long time, perhaps. But when you tell her the story, tell her that, too."

"I will," Orlando answered. Then, with his eyes upon her face, "Kiss me, Elizabeth, once."

Slowly, and with drooping eyelids, she lifted up her face and they kissed each other, for the first time and the last. Orlando, as her face sank away from him, felt, with an aching as of tears at his heart, that here the story of his youth was ended.

For her, she felt the earnest grasp of her hands in his, the touch of his lips, the separation. For a moment she stood with her head bent and her eyes closed; then,

slowly, she opened her eyes and was alone. In her heart was the peace of struggles, now, at last, over. There was nothing left to hope or to fear, henceforth. "I have finished with life," she murmured to herself.

She sat down, once more, in the chair from which she had risen to watch for Orlando's coming. That had happened when she lived in another world. Below her she heard the voices of Millie and Gilbert, and in the next room the patter of the children's feet and their gurgling laughter. She smiled gently; all this happy life was well. It was good that there should be this peace and content in the world. For her, her life was done; the tranquillity of age had come to her. She had fought her battle and Heaven had given her strength to conquer. From this time she might have rest. Never again should come the heat and cold, the hope

and the defeat, of personal struggle. Only, there were others in the world to whom she might bring help, and that was well. Her lips formed themselves to the familiar words heard yesterday, in the little church among the graves : ' Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace.'

Death was far off yet ; she did not desire to call it nearer. In this world was peace enough. The blue, still sea was a delight ; a bird was chirping on the house-top, and the voices of the children were at hand. Sitting, with her hands folded upon her book, Elizabeth Glendinning looked back upon her life, which had opened with every promise of hope, and which ended thus, and told herself that there was no moment of it which she would exchange for this.

Orlando went out, and leaving the town behind him, sought the heightening cliffs that run away to the north. There, with

the blue, many-twinkling sea before him, and above him the softer blueness of the sky, creeping down by imperceptible degrees to meet it, he threw himself on the short grass and looked his life in the face. Through all his aching sorrow of sympathy for Elizabeth, he felt yet that this solution was the best, the truest, the most natural. It was as if he had come up into the light out of a dark and airless passage. His entreaties to Elizabeth had been full of an agonized sincerity, yet he felt that it was better they should not have been granted —better not for his own happiness (that would have seemed to him, had he thought about it, to be dislocated beyond all possibility of setting right), but absolutely better, more in accordance with the inner laws of nature. He was free, but it was the freedom of a man whose friend has fallen in his place. The *Te Deum* of victory is a melancholy music, full of recol-

lection of the dead; yet it is a music of triumph, as the words of a funeral service are words of hope, suggesting the higher harmony in which this discord melts. Orlando looked back as we look back when all is over; the event has rounded to a perfect past, we can see now what was its form. As the lower branches fall off from the rising tree, that past had fallen from him, leaving the growth of his life to burgeon, unimpeded, into its truer shape. Yet they fed the tree, and their influence lives on it and moulds the new year's flowers. The past is but dead in the body, its spirit survives and works.

Orlando, lying here to-day, thought of that other Orlando, that younger brother, so like and so unlike himself, who, seven years ago, lay looking onward into his life. There are no words in which to say that fulfilment had not been attained. His life had shaped itself to the outward pattern of all

that he had dreamed ; the love for which he had hoped had come to him in a full clearness that put his visions to shame. Yet how different was it all in looking back—how much deeper, fuller, more painful, more emotional, different with all the difference of the smile on a boy's lips then, and the sigh on a man's now! He had 'won through,' as the poetic Scotch phrase has it ; but the winner as well as the loser comes out of the fight soiled and dusty, with his armour bruised and his limbs weary, not with the smile of anticipation and the even breathings of untried strength. As he lay, hearing below him the murmur of the unseen waves, Orlando lived through his youth again, and understood the slow sweetening of the crude purpose into the ripe, the slow broadening of narrow into wider fields of hope, all the gradual growth of the soul which made the aspirations of this second pausing place so

like, in the words that might have clothed them, to those of the first, so far apart from them in inner spirit. For the truths which he had known by name then, he knew now face to face, had lived beside them and felt their breath upon him. Opening his eyes to the immeasurable blue, he lay, not trying to fasten the fetters of speech upon his thought, letting his soul breathe itself up through the summer silence in a deep, reverent communion. Slowly the stillness deepened, and the blue deepened with it to the noon. Orlando, rising, turned homeward to meet his new life; to meet, not as once before, a face that fitted itself to his dreams, but the woman whose full soul made answer to his own.

THE END.

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